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"IT ISN'T RIGHT;"

OR,

FRANK JOHNSON'S REASON.

Mrs. Ruth (Buck) Lamb

"And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of
the Lord: that it may be well with thee."—DEUT. vi 18.

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"IT ISN'T RIGHT;

OR,

FRANK JOHNSON'S REASON.

CHAPTER I.

WORKING UP AT SUNNY LEE.—AN UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE.

OW, Aldridge, you must send some men up to my house the very first thing in the morning. Mrs. Philips and all my young fry are off to the sea-side; and, as the autumn is advancing, they cannot make a very long stay there: yet I am most anxious to have these alterations completed during their absence. In fact, I *must* have all put in order before they return to Sunny Lee."

The speaker, Mr. Philips, was a wealthy, retired manufacturer,—a man of most energetic character and thorough business habits.

He had been in a great measure the architect of his own fortunes; for he had begun life with very little money. But he had a large capital in the way of sound sense and principle, and what might be called almost dogged perseverance. Of him people were wont to say that if Luke Philips resolved upon a thing it was as good as done. And doubtless the reason of this was that Luke Philips never commenced a thing without first thoroughly convincing himself that it was both right and desirable. When that point was settled to his satisfaction, he threw his whole powers both of mind and body into the work, and rarely failed to achieve success. While a weak or undecided man would have remained trembling on the brink of a difficulty, he would have boldly breasted—ay, and overcome—the opposition.

Men of Mr. Philips's character are not

usually very patient with those of an opposite disposition. They like to make people see with their eyes, and believe as they believe, that difficulties will vanish into thin air if we only oppose them boldly.

On the particular occasion alluded to, Mr. Philips had to deal with a man whose character differed widely from his own. Aldridge, the builder, was one of your easy-going, somewhat dilatory persons, who strongly dislike to be hurried or put out of their own beaten path. He was well-to-do in the world,—in fact, the wealthiest mechanic in Millfield; though he had not become such by his own exertions. Three generations of John Aldridges had lived and died in the same spot and in the same line of business. All of them had been plodding, steady men, who placed perfect confidence in the old adage, "A rolling stone gathers no moss." And as each was gathered to his fathers, he had carefully impressed this maxim on his son and successor that was to be. Each, too, had been able to

say to his son, "I leave you more than my father left me," as a practical proof, if such were needed, of the value of staying at home to do well, instead of going elsewhere in the vague hope of doing better.

John Aldridge the fourth walked in the steps of his forefathers. He worked steadily enough, or, rather, he kept other people at work; but he presumed just a little upon his position. He knew that he had the best stock of timber in all Millfield; and he often boasted that there were never any cracked panels or shrunk doors through *his* using green wood in their construction. Then, he had good hands to do his work, and he was quite aware that no other man in Millfield in his line of business could take an extensive contract, as they all wanted the needful capital. With all these advantages on his side, Mr. Aldridge was rather accustomed to having people ask what time would suit him to do things, than to being dictated to with regard to the exact period he was to occupy about it.

Naturally enough, Mr. Philips's "*must*" sounded rather harshly in John Aldridge's ears, and he began to demur. "I really don't see how we can send men to Sunny Lee in the morning," he said. "We have a great many jobs on hand just now. How long did you say you could give us, Mr. Philips?"

"I did not mention any time, Aldridge. I know that the alterations can be completed within a fortnight, if they are commenced at once and steadily gone on with. I have lost no time in coming to arrange with you; for Mrs. Philips only left Sunny Lee half an hour ago."

John Aldridge stood to consider about it for a minute or two, and still "didn't see how it could be managed." The truth was, he wanted a little coaxing to undertake the work.

But Mr. Philips was not the man to waste words; and he at once said, "Well, Aldridge, it is for you to take the job and execute it forthwith, or to leave it altogether. I know if you

do undertake the work it will be well done,—a thing I could not be sure of with regard to any other Millfield builder. If, however, you have already too much on your hands, I must look elsewhere.”

This speech mollified our workman not a little. It contained a compliment to himself; and he directly decided that it would be any thing but creditable were the richest man in Millfield to go out of the place for somebody to do his work. Therefore he replied, with something like alacrity, that he certainly was not afraid to compare work done by his hands with that executed by anybody else, either in town or country, and—what was more to the purpose—that Mr. Philips might count on seeing his people at Sunny Lee on the following morning.

“That will do admirably, Aldridge. Now I will wish you a good day.”

The builder returned a suitable answer, and was already on his way towards his home, when he again heard Mr. Philips's voice:—

"Just another word, Aldridge. Send some of your steadiest fellows to Sunny Lee. I don't like to have any riff-raff about my premises."

"My workmen are all first-class hands, sir."

"Ay, ay,—I know; but that is not what I mean. I needn't explain myself; for I am sure you understand me perfectly. Good-day, again."

Mr. Philips walked briskly away, and John Aldridge turned homewards once more, to dinner.

"What's the matter now, John?" said his good wife, as she caught sight of a cloud on the usually placid brow of her husband.

"Some work to be done at Sunny Lee, my dear."

"No better man to work for than the master of *that* house, John. He likes a good article; but he never grudges a fair price, and is always prompt in his payments."

"That is all true enough; but he wants his alterations begun and ended in less time than

it would take another man to decide on having a thing done at all. And you know I hate to be hurried."

John Aldridge's active little wife would have been well contented to see more persons like Mr. Philips in this respect. She and the master of Sunny Lee were kindred spirits, and, with regard to her own domestic matters, Mrs. Aldridge was just the woman to finish while another would only have planned. But she well knew her husband's easy-going fashion, and, while she respected those worthy and admirable points in his character which made him a good husband and father, she often wished that he had been gifted with a little more energy. Yet she had too much good sense to lecture or worry John because his character was the very opposite of her own. So, now, though perfectly conscious that if Mr. Philips considered the time allowed for the work sufficient it really was so, she did not venture to tell her husband as much, but only said,—

"Well, John, can you manage to accommodate Mr. Philips?"

"I have promised to try; but there's something else. Mr. Philips is particular about the class of workmen to be employed in his house. He says he will have no riff-raff at Sunny Lee. I know what he means, well enough. Two or three of my fellows are any thing but steady in their conduct or choice in their language; and I really can't pretend to insist on their picking their words. If they only do *my* work thoroughly, I must shut my eyes and ears to little matters of that sort."

Now, Mrs. Aldridge had always thought that her husband kept his eyes shut to many things that he ought to have noticed,—more especially with regard to the morality of his work-people. But, when she had ventured to say a word or two, John had been any thing but pleased, and frankly told her that, as he did not interfere with her domestic arrangements or presume to dictate as to the man-

agement of her two serving-maids, she must please to let *him* rule in his own particular department.

Your easy-tempered men are usually the most jealous of any interference:—probably because a hint as to duty stirs up their slumbering consciences, and makes them feel that, after all, there is something culpable in maintaining a character for good nature at the expense of right and simply to encourage natural idleness. Good nature is, indeed, often only another name for indolence.

There was a little pause in the conversation after John Aldridge informed his wife of Mr. Philips's requirements, and then Mrs. Aldridge suggested, "I should let Frank Johnson go to Sunny Lee, for one. He is sure to conduct himself properly."

"Ay, there is Frank. He is all right enough. I wish all the rest were like him. But Harry Enfield must go too, if the work is to be done; and very likely he may set off on a drinking-bout before the week is out.

Besides, I know he'll bridle that saucy tongue of his for no man living."

"I think Harry Enfield's language is worse than saucy, John. He is shockingly profane; and if it were not for his poor wife and children, who already suffer too much through his faults, I should heartily wish that he was never going to set foot in your workshop again. As to bridling his tongue for any man, that is out of the question, since his own sense of right is not sufficient to make him keep his lips clean from the horrid language he is accustomed to indulge in."

"My dear, I really cannot help Harry Enfield's profaneness. It is not my business to preach to him about it. I take care that he does his duty by me; and I have talked to him about neglecting his wife and family. For their sakes I continue to employ him; and, to do the rascal justice," added Mr. Aldridge, in a less testy tone, "he almost gets through as much work as two when he gets his hands steadied again. As I said before,

he must go to Sunny Lee, for one. I understand that Mr. Philips will be off in the morning to Ilfracombe, where he will join his family, and that he will not return for a week at any rate. By that time we shall have got on a long way with the alterations."

Mr. Aldridge thought he had now settled all things admirably; and on the following morning a troop of workmen, having been duly instructed, made their appearance at Sunny Lee, and commenced the business by pulling to pieces, or, so to speak, turning the house out of the windows. Among these were the two named by the master,—Frank Johnson and Harry Enfield.

The former was especially noted for his quiet, orderly conduct and steady attention to business; and the latter, as will have been already gathered from the conversation related above, possessed admirable skill as a workman, but no stability.

Often, very often, when business was pressing and when even quiet Mr. Aldridge was

stirred into something like activity, Harry would desert his bench, leave plane and chisel lying idle thereon, and be constant only in his attendance at his favourite ale-house. Then, having spent all his earnings and left himself penniless, having made his wife unhappy and displeased his master, Harry would at length begin to think of resuming work.

Harry Enfield's life was, indeed, passed in alternate fits of drunken folly and fierce labour; and as evil habits are rarely weakened by time, but gain strength by being indulged in, he formed no exception to the general rule. The intervals between these fits of dissipation grew shorter and shorter, and every day this man, who might have been a truly valuable member of society, became less worthy of trust, more under the dominion of his besetting sins. And he had not the excuse—a poor one at best—which some men have for forsaking their homes. His wife was a healthy and industrious woman, who made every penny of Harry's earnings go as far as possible, and

who often added to their little income by her own exertions.

Unfortunately, though, she found out that the more she worked and earned, the less her husband brought in, and that he seemed to think her labours rendered exertion on his part less necessary. Is it wonderful that such conduct soured the poor woman's temper and unnerved her willing hands?

"I could work night and day with him if it were needful, or for him and the children if he were laid up by sickness; but it is hard to see him act as he does," poor Mary Enfield would say, as she saw the light of wedded love extinguished in her husband's breast, and a father's duty forgotten, for the sake of sensual indulgence.

Still, she is in one sense a happy woman who can say, "Though my husband has gone astray, though he neglects his own home, and sees no attraction in his wife, no charm in the light of his fireside, and though he hears no music in his children's voices, but too often

drowns the sound with bitter words, yet I am not to blame. I have performed my duty; I have been a help-meet in the true sense of the word, and my conscience is clear." Poor Mary Enfield could say this; and often, when all else was dark around her, she was supported and enabled to struggle with her arduous lot by the precious thought that she was only continuing in the path of duty, wherein she had hitherto been mercifully upheld.

Frank Johnson was less fortunate in one sense. He had a good wife; but, unhappily, she was a delicate woman, whose ill health was a source of very serious and frequent expense. With all the will in the world to be careful, and assist her husband in his endeavours to get a little beforehand, she was not able to do so. A little extra exertion when about her household work, undertaken for the purpose of saving, was often the cause of an illness which unfitted her even for lighter labours. So, though Frank plodded steadily,

and made extra wages by working over-time, he grew no richer, but always found that it required all he could scrape together to supply the wants of an ailing partner and a rapidly increasing family.

Such were the relative positions of two of the workmen who went up to Sunny Lee together on that September morning.

Harry Enfield had just resumed work again, after an unusually long absence from the shop; and his mind was much more occupied by his recent orgies at the ale-house than by his present employment.

One of the men, happening to observe Enfield's trembling hands, made a jesting remark about the penalty he had to pay for past indulgence. "Your missus and the youngsters don't suffer quite by themselves when you carry on in such a wild fashion. Why, man, your hands are as shaky as a reed in a December wind! I wouldn't have mine in that state for all the world. Just look at Enfield's trembling hands, Johnson."

Frank Johnson gave a slight glance towards Harry, but resumed his work without making any remark. He was too well aware of Harry's irritable temper to allow himself to say a word which might excite it; and he gave a warning glance towards the other speaker, as if he would beg him to make no allusion to Enfield's evident unfitness for labour.

But Enfield was just in the mood to be half boastful, half irritable towards his companions, whether they were forbearing or otherwise; and, when in such a mood, Johnson, as the most peaceable of all his work-fellows, was pretty sure to be the one with whom he would try to pick a quarrel. Frank's silence was therefore more annoying than his speech would probably have been; and Harry said, in a sneering tone, "You mustn't fancy that Johnson will bestow a look or a word on a reprobate fellow like me. *He* is a long way too good to take his pipe and his glass, or even to talk to those who do. For my part, I don't

see any good in life if one doesn't enjoy it;" and forthwith he began to chant, in a loud but rather tremulous voice, a song in praise of sociality and good-fellowship.

Frank and the other man looked round, to see if any person was within hearing; for Mr. Aldridge had given them all an especial charge to be quiet and well behaved while within the walls of Sunny Lee. Then the former said, gently, "I believe, Harry, I enjoy life as much you do,—though in a different fashion. I have my home pleasures, which are very precious to me; and I can look back with some satisfaction on the evenings spent by my own fireside."

"Very delightful, I dare say, Mr. Sober-sides: only, you see, I look at things in a different light. I don't choose to be put in leading-strings by any woman; and I should be very sorry to be tied to an apron-string, as you are by that white-faced wife of yours."

The blood mounted to Frank Johnson's forehead as Harry made this allusion to his

wife's ill health, and he was tempted to return a hasty reply. But he succeeded in checking the angry words that trembled on his lips, and replied,—

“It isn't right in you, Harry, to taunt me about what is no fault of mine. I can tell you, it often makes me sad enough to see my poor wife's white face, as you call it, and to think that its paleness is caused by suffering. And I don't know,” he added, with natural warmth, “that there is any thing unmanly in my caring for the woman whom I promised before God to love and cherish.”

Frank Johnson was not thinking of Harry's opposite course of conduct when he made this remark. Neither had he any intention to provoke his excitable companion by an allusion to the duty of a husband. But Harry chose to consider Frank's speech as an indirect attack upon himself, and, accordingly, replied, in a sneering and angry tone,—

“Of course you are a model husband, and I am a drunken brute. Well, if you like, you can

keep your wife in idleness, and make a slave of yourself to support her in her fine-lady airs; but for my part, I say, let the women work. I slave hard enough when I'm at it, and then I let my missus take a turn at the mill. Turn and turn about's fair: isn't it, eh, Mr. Sobersides?"

Frank Johnson did not wish to be put out of temper by Harry's sneers; at the same time, he found it hard to keep down his rising indignation at the attack upon his ailing wife. His flushed face told of the internal conflict, —which the other workman also perceived. This last was anxious to prevent any disagreement: so he said, "Take no notice of Harry, Frank. He says ill-natured things; but never mind. Hard words break no bones, and, for a comfort, thy wife isn't here to listen to his sneers. We know what he is, and we know what thou art, lad; and I'll be bound to say there isn't a woman in all Millfield but what would sooner be Frank Johnson's wife than Harry Enfield's."

Enfield's reply to this was a string of oaths, and the angry question, "What did he begin about his marriage promise, and all that, for, unless it was to vex me?"

"I never thought of you in the matter, Harry," returned Frank, quietly. "It was you that spoke of my poor wife's white face in a taunting way; and it isn't right of you to talk of her in such a manner. I can bear sneers that only touch myself; but I can't stand and hold my tongue when you attack her."

"Right, lad," interposed the third workman. "Stand up for thy wife; and you, Harry, do let people alone. Frank never would have said a word to thee if thou hadn't begun it. And as to his making mention of his marriage promise, why, surely there was no harm in that. Thou shouldn't be so ready to fit caps on to thy own head."

Frank could scarcely help laughing at the cool manner in which his companion, Dick Halliday, placed the dispute in a right light.

But he was careful not to let Harry see his countenance; and the latter, not mindful to carry on a discussion in which he evidently got the worst of it, again commenced singing a low song, the principal feature in which was its lack of sense and its profanity.

"Come, Harry," interposed Dick Halliday, once more, "keep that song for the tap-room of the Wheatsheaf,—there's a good fellow. I fancy these walls don't often echo back such language as thou'rt making them ring with. Besides, Mr. Aldridge was very particular in asking thee to keep a civil tongue in thy head while thou wert under Mr. Philips's roof. It isn't right to go on so as soon as the master's back's turned."

"*It isn't right*—is it?" returned Harry, in a mocking tone, and with an additional string of coarse and profane words. "That's Frank Johnson's logic. He always says, 'It isn't right.'"

"Well, Frank Johnson isn't ashamed to own his reason; and you can't say that it is

right to use such language,—to say nothing of neglecting Mr. Aldridge's express wish."

"And pray why isn't it right, Mr. Pious? Just give us chapter and verse for it. Treat us to a sermon; though, for my part, I shall want a pint of beer to help it down, if I am to listen."

"And I can give you chapter and verse, Harry; though, mind you, I'm not in the habit of quoting from the Bible every minute, or preaching either. I hope I reverence the word of God too much to have it always on my tongue. I would rather show by my life that I had it in my heart. But, as you say you want chapter and verse to prove that it isn't right to use such language as you do, you shall have it. There's no need to go any further than the third commandment to do that; but I never can hear you use such language as you do without thinking of the words, 'He clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment.' I don't say this in any ill will, Enfield; but I do wish, for your own

sake, that you would refrain from making the walls of every place we work in echo with curses."

"So you think I shall pick my words to suit your squeamish ears, do you?"

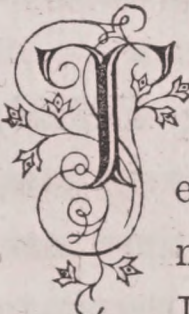
"I don't want you to please me, Enfield. Our master—who has been a good one to you—asked you as a favour to be quiet and decent in your conduct and speech while you were under Mr. Philips's roof."

"Old Philips is far enough away by this time; and if he were close beside me, I'd see him——"

What might have ended Harry Enfield's speech cannot be told; for, to the astonishment of all the workmen, Mr. Philips entered the apartment!

CHAPTER II.

TURNED OUT.

 HE somewhat eccentric master of Sunny Lee proved, by his abrupt entrance, that he was a good deal nearer than Harry Enfield supposed. It is true he had intended to start by an early morning train to join his wife and family at the sea-side; but, on second thoughts, he resolved to stay and see whether dilatory John Aldridge would really keep his word and commence the work immediately. Thus it chanced that, as he sat taking his breakfast in an apartment adjoining that in which the three workmen were employed, he overheard nearly the whole of their conversation. It was with difficulty he restrained his indig-

nation as Harry Enfield's first outbreak fell on his ear; for he was displeased not only at the profane speaker, but at the employer who, after his especial warning, had sent such a man to Sunny Lee. However, he did restrain himself until his own name was brought in, in the manner related; and then he suddenly made his appearance among the astonished group.

"Well, sir," said he, addressing Enfield, "old Philips is near enough for you to see now, I hope. He has heard you for some time past, with no little disgust, but still more regret, to think that the blessed gift of speech should be thus abused. Man, man! do you ever consider that when the power of speech was bestowed upon us, it was not given that we might corrupt the very air with blasphemy, but that we might utter prayer and praise to God, and words of love, consolation, kindness and good will to our neighbours, as well as to assist us in transacting the necessary business of life?"

The speaker looked straight at the offending workman, and Harry himself was for once abashed by the stern dignity of "Old Philips," as he had called him but the minute before. He began to mutter a sort of apology for his coarse language,—said the other fellows were always aggravating him, and then *he* got all the blame; but that if he had known Mr. Philips was so near——

He was not allowed to finish the sentence. "So you would have condescended to abstain from turning your lips into a channel for curses, out of regard for *my* ears, sir: would you? I ought to be very much obliged to you, I suppose; but I have no wish for such abstinence on my own account. Man, man!" added Mr. Philips, "do you consider the meaning of your poor apology? It simply amounts to this: that, while you might have bridled your profane tongue for the sake of advancing your earthly master's interests, or because I was within hearing, you would not have denied yourself the utterance of one foul and blas-

phemous word in obedience to the command of Him who made us both, and who at this moment holds our lives in his hand. But my walls *shall not* ring with sounding oaths. Only a few hours since, they echoed back the tones of my youngest child, who was learning its first prayer at its mother's knee. You, sir, may carry your blasphemy elsewhere."

Mr. Philips was in earnest. It mattered not to him that by sending away Harry Enfield from Sunny Lee he retarded the progress of the alterations he was so anxious to complete, and deprived himself of the services of one out of the three pair of hands that—whatever the tongues might do—were all capable of advancing his wishes. Nay, more: he knew that Mr. Aldridge would seize upon this act of his and hold it up as an excuse for any amount of short-comings on the score of punctuality. But he had weighed these matters before he spoke, and was prepared to take the consequences. It was a principle of his to lose no opportunity of discountenancing

vice or impiety, in whatever form it might present itself; and he was equally anxious to encourage whatever was right. Mr. Philips, therefore, only acted up to the principles he professed, and not from a momentary fit of ill temper excited by the workman's disrespectful mention of himself, when he insisted on Harry Enfield's departure.

It was in no amiable mood that Enfield threw his tools into his satchel and departed from Sunny Lee. Probably, had not both his money and credit been exhausted, he would have betaken himself to the tap-room of the Wheat-sheaf; but, as he knew there was already a long score chalked up against him, and no chance of its being lengthened, he was fain to keep outside its walls. Inwardly, he vowed vengeance against that smooth-tongued Frank Johnson; outwardly, he vented his wrath on the only ones who were compelled to endure it,—his wife and children. On his way from Sunny Lee he met Mr. Aldridge, who was just going thither.

"Well, Harry, have you made a start up at Mr. Philips's?" asked Mr. Aldridge. "But how's this? You're coming away with your tools in your hand. It isn't dinner-time yet, man. I'm afraid you are off to the old haunt, Harry; and you really are using me very badly."

Mr. Aldridge looked as much offended and spoke as sternly as was consistent with his general determination "not to be put out of the way;" and Harry winced a little under his evident displeasure.

"We made a beginning at Sunny Lee, sir," he returned, "and I have made an ending; but it isn't my own fault. Mr. Philips has sent me off. I'm too plain-spoken for him. But I wasn't off to the Wheatsheaf, either; for I was on my way to find you and see where I had better go now."

Mr. Aldridge understood how the matter was, without further explanation, and in his own mind he thought Mr. Philips too particular. After a rebuke which he intended

to be very severe, but at which Enfield only smiled the moment his back was turned, Mr. Aldridge told the man where to go to join more of his comrades at another job, and then passed on. "I wish," thought he to himself, "that Harry had held that unruly tongue of his until the old gentleman was out of hearing. However, if the work isn't done at the time, I have a capital excuse of his own furnishing."

The builder did not trouble himself with the thought of that other Being whose ear and eye are alike open to mark our doings. He only thought of Harry Enfield's conduct as it was likely to affect his own business, and consoled himself with the idea that all beyond this was Harry's look-out,—not his. Certainly, he heartily wished Mr. Philips at Ilfracombe with his wife and children, or in any other place out of sight and hearing.

But Mr. Philips was not to be put out of the way so easily. Instead of joining his family immediately, he sent a letter to tell his wife

she must not expect him just yet, and stayed to superintend the alterations. Not all the noise and general topsy-turviness that characterized his home could drive him away. He might have spent his whole life amid the clatter of hammers, planes and saws, for any thing he seemed to care for the noise; and he was continually popping in among the work-people when he was least expected,—to their great amusement. Frank Johnson and Dick Halliday were the principal men there; and, as they were accustomed to work remembering in whose presence they *always* stood, the company of Mr. Philips caused them neither inconvenience nor alarm.

While Frank Johnson was thus employed, Mr. Philips, who had been greatly struck by symptoms of sterling good qualities in the man, made many inquiries about him, and heard nothing but what confirmed the opinion he had previously formed. Among others with whom Mr. Philips had a talk about Frank, was Dick Halliday. “You and John-

son appear to be good friends," said he. "I think he seems a decent, steady fellow."

"A capital fellow, sir," said Dick, turning his honest eyes towards the owner of Sunny Lee. "As to being friends with Frank, I don't know who could help it, except such a chap as that Harry Enfield, who won't be friends with anybody, least of all with himself."

"True. And Johnson's wife is a worthy woman, too, I hear."

"She is, indeed. She has poor health, but that isn't her fault. It's a misfortune to them both; though Frank is not the man to say a word about *that*. He always makes the best of things; and he *is* a good husband, if you like. I never saw him flush up so about any thing as he did that day we first came to Sunny Lee, when Enfield was sneering at Mrs. Johnson's *white* face."

"Ah, I remember. I heard something of that as I sat in the next room. And, by the way, I caught some sneer about 'Frank Johnson's reason.' What was meant by that?"

“Why, you see, sir, Frank is a very quiet fellow, and, in a general way, a man of few words. But one of his particular expressions is, ‘It isn’t right.’ That’s always his speech if he wants to remonstrate with anybody about what he considers is contrary to our duty to God or our neighbour. He doesn’t reason or argue with a lot of words; but when he has once made up his mind that a thing isn’t right, he can neither be led nor driven to have any thing to do with it. He is as resolute as a lion, sir. So it is just from his dogged, determined way of saying those two or three words, and his frequent use of them, that we have got to call them ‘Frank Johnson’s reason.’”

“And a very good reason too, and a capital guide for a man’s conduct. But now about these doors, Halliday: do you think they should open outwards, or inwards?”

With this question Mr. Philips turned the subject to business-matters, and appeared as though he had forgotten all about Frank

Johnson. But the future proved that he had not made so many inquiries without a special motive.

Mr. Philips made two or three brief visits to Ilfracombe; but his good lady and children grumbled not only that they had so little of his company, but that for once he had failed in carrying out his resolution. The alterations at Sunny Lee were not completed by the time first named, and the trees were nearly bare of leaves before Mrs. Philips was enabled to return to her home at Millfield.

While the work at Sunny Lee was going on, Frank Johnson and Enfield saw very little of each other, as the former found constant employment under Mr. Philips's roof. They did meet now and then; and Frank had to endure occasional taunts and gibes from the angry man, whose comrades, knowing his hasty temper, had found amusement in reminding him of his speedy expulsion from the "great house." Perhaps but for this foolish interference Enfield's wrath would have died out;

but, as it was, the anger which was at first as a spark was fanned into a flame. In the course of time the men were again labouring together in the home workshop; and then Frank found that Harry was doing his worst in order to render it positively untenable by him. He had found out the one sore point with Frank; and he was either continually uttering covert taunts with regard to Mrs. Johnson, or else condoling with him in mocking words respecting his sickly and expensive help-meet. It was in vain that Frank tried to propitiate his quarrelsome neighbour. "It isn't right," was sufficient to keep the one from doing wrong, but it could not sway the other; and at length Frank was driven to request the interference of Mr. Aldridge.

"I've tried my best to agree with Enfield," he said. "I've put up with so much abuse, and so many taunts, that I believe the other men think I'm a coward, because I try to keep peace and *will not* quarrel. But you know the old saying, sir, that 'continual

dropping will wear out the hardest stone; and my patience is pretty nigh worn out by constant trial. I don't mean to brawl, and make a blackguard of myself; neither will I answer him in his own style, because 'it isn't right;' but this I have made up my mind to:—if I can't work peaceably in your shop, I must do it elsewhere, sir; though I should be sorry to leave an employer who has always used me well."

Mr. Aldridge opened his eyes very wide at this uncommonly long speech from Frank Johnson. "Why, Frank, my good fellow, what is all this about? Why can't you be friends? How can you expect me to interfere with your quarrels? It really is very vexatious for me to be brought into the thing at all. Make it up with Enfield, now,—do,—and let's hear no more about it."

As Mr. Aldridge spoke, he put on the air of vexation which showed that he deemed Frank's appeal in the light of a personal injury. He would have turned away and pooh-

poohed the whole affair; but Frank had made up his mind that this wasn't right, and his earnest tones arrested Mr. Aldridge in spite of himself.

"I have already told you, sir, that I wish to be friendly with all my mates, and why this cannot be brought about. I did my best before I came to you, and I am here because I considered you the proper person to appeal to to preserve peace and order on your own premises. I say it in no disrespect, sir, but I am determined that if I cannot have liberty to go quietly about my duty, without having to fight for mastery over a quarrelsome man or to outbrawl him in order to silence his taunting tongue, I will seek employment somewhere else. And I have served you faithfully for a good many years."

"To be sure, Frank; certainly. A better man I would not wish to have; and, if an extra shilling or two a week would mend things, I wouldn't mind advancing your wages a trifle."

The colour rose in Frank's face as he heard this proposal. It seemed to sound almost like an insult. It grated on his ear as would the direct offer of a bribe. "It isn't that, sir; it isn't that," he returned. "I am satisfied to be paid the same as other men of the same class as myself. Not but what I find use for all I can earn; but I had no such motive, in speaking to you, as that of obtaining higher pay. All I ask is that you will use your authority, as master, to keep order among your men, so that those who would live at peace may not be forced into quarrels whether they will or no."

While Frank spoke, he looked in Mr. Aldridge's face, and could not help being struck with the perplexed expression visible upon it. He knew Mr. Aldridge was sensible that what he had complained of needed redress; but he also knew how he hated to be troubled, and how wanting he was in moral courage. Is it wonderful that, as the workman thus read his character in his face, his own sentiment of

respect towards his employer was greatly weakened?

"Well, well, I'll see about it, Frank. You may depend upon my speaking to Enfield," said Mr. Aldridge, after a brief conference with himself. "And I hope I shall hear no more talk of your leaving me. I can't spare such a man as you."

"And I should be as sorry to leave; but—you know, sir——"

"Yes, yes, I understand, Frank," interrupted Mr. Aldridge, impatiently; and Frank, seeing that he was not inclined to hear any more, respectfully bade him good-night.

This conversation took place in John Aldridge's own house, after working-hours, and Mrs. Aldridge had heard the whole of it. While Frank was present, however, she refrained from speaking, except to make a kind inquiry after his wife and children; but after his back was turned, she said, "Johnson has put up with a great deal more than most men would have borne, I believe."

"Oh, I dare say. That Enfield is an aggravating fellow. If it were not for his wife, I would dismiss him at once. He isn't fit to stand beside poor Frank."

"It is just the thought of poor Mary Enfield that has so long stayed you from saying the word that would dismiss her husband, I know, John. And, after all, I don't think she is much the better for any work he does. Harry earns money by hard labour, to squander it foolishly. Very little of it finds its way into Mary's pocket; and the woman is always slaving to keep a home over her children's heads. I sometimes think she would be better off without him altogether."

"Ay, Harry is a sample of the class of men who 'earn their money like horses and spend it like asses,'" replied John Aldridge. "However," he added, in quite a determined tone, "I am resolved that he shall keep within bounds while he is at work. I don't value him so much as to drive away a good servant like Frank Johnson for his sake."

Mr. Aldridge spoke valiantly, and his good wife heartily encouraged him to act as well as talk. But it so happened that he did not see Enfield that evening. On the following day he had to go from Millfield on business, and, before the next one arrived, the old easy-going disposition began to assert itself, and he was ready to be angry with Frank for having made an appeal to him. Yet he did *talk* to Harry. He called him aside, and remonstrated with him, after a fashion; but this assertion of authority with regard to the morals of his workman placed him in such a novel position that he certainly did not fill it with dignity. Nay, he shrank before the eyes of the man whose words professed respect and submission to his employer while his whole manner belied them. So Mr. Aldridge, with right on his side, was a coward in the presence of the unabashed individual who listened, cap in hand, to what was intended to be a severe rebuke, and who left him the minute afterwards with the determination to make not

only the workshop, but Millfield itself, too hot to hold Frank Johnson.

“The tell-tale!” he muttered, as he walked moodily away. “So he has been sneaking to Mr. Aldridge, like a petted child to his mother, instead of settling his own quarrels like a man. But I’ll be even with him yet, —mind if I don’t.”

For the first day or two after Mr. Aldridge’s rebuke was administered, Harry Enfield’s behaviour was truly exemplary. Not a taunting word escaped his lips, and Frank began to rejoice in the increased peace and comfort of the workshop. In the lightness of his heart, he endeavoured to show marks of good will and civility to Enfield, in order to prove that he had not been actuated by any malice in taking means to obtain the privilege of working unmolested. But it formed no part of Harry’s intention to let the matter rest here. In place of receiving Frank’s advances in a good-natured spirit, he deliberately turned towards him and said, “I want nothing either

to say or to do with a mean, pitiful tell-tale, who could go sneaking to the master and whining out his complaints behind one's back, instead of speaking out like a man."

"Hold thy foolish tongue, lad," interposed Dick Halliday. "I wonder which of you looks most like a man at this minute? He has little of the man in him who defiles what was made in God's image into the likeness of a senseless brute, as you do often enough. You may try to taunt Frank, and think it mighty brave to aggravate him into quarrelling with you; but, I'll tell you what, it needs a deal more courage to conquer one's self than to stand up before a fellow like you and fight it out."

"It's lucky for Frank that, not being able to defend himself, he has such a champion as you, Dick," retorted Enfield.

"Ay, and you'll not find that I have the moral courage he has; but I've something else, and I'll stand no nonsense."

"I've no quarrel with you, Dick," replied

Enfield, in a tone which raised a laugh in the workshop; for Halliday was one whom they all knew it was not safe to provoke.

"Then let others alone too. I tell you plainly, I stand by Frank; and, if it comes to the push, Mr. Aldridge will do the same: so it will be better for you to sign articles and proclaim peace," said Dick, in a jocular manner.

From Dick's remarks, and the manner of the other workmen, Enfield judged that he had gone too far, and that the feeling was against him; and, as he had no wish to leave his present easy-tempered employer, he thought fit to cease all annoyance during working-hours. But this did not procure peace for Frank elsewhere; and the next time that Enfield left off work to engage in a drinking-bout he had the full benefit of his smothered wrath. Though his daily comrades did not take his part, there were his companions at the Wheatsheaf, to whom he could revile Frank to his heart's content; and through

them he contrived many ways of taunting his workfellow.

Frank was going home one evening, and on his road thither he encountered a group whom he would fain have avoided. In fact, he was half inclined to turn back and take another road, that he might not pass the idlers assembled at the corner near the Wheat-sheaf; but, fearing that this movement might provoke what he wished to prevent, he quietly kept on his way. The moment he came within hearing, Harry Enfield, who, with flushed face and staggering gait, had just reeled out of the tap-room, began to make allusions to "cowards" and "tell-tales," and to repeat sneers, which Frank well knew were intended for him. The speaker was applauded by the surrounding group, some of whom had been sharing in Harry's revels at his expense, —for he was in possession of a whole week's wages when he entered the public-house; and their encouragement impelled Harry to redouble his efforts at annoyance. "Yes," said

Harry, "this is Liberty Hall, friends. It will be of no use for a sneaking tell-tale to lodge complaints against us to our friend the landlord."

A loud laugh followed this speech, and it seemed still to ring in Frank Johnson's ears as he lifted the latch of his own door. He did not intend to tell his wife of what had passed; but, looking in his face, she read that something was the matter; though his kind question, "Do you feel better to-night, wife?" proved that, whatever might have vexed him out-of-doors, he brought nothing of it in with him to mar the hallowed peace of home.

"Yes, thank you, Frank; I am better. But what has happened?"

Frank laughed. "What a sharp-sighted wife I have!"

"No: you are a bad hand at playing hypocrite, Frank. I can always tell as well when any thing has happened to make you uncomfortable, as though I had stood by at the time."

"I don't like to bring my bits of troubles

and vexations to you. You have enough to bear in the way of pain, and yet you hardly ever complain; and when you have your household troubles, you don't keep a list of them to entertain me with when I come in. It isn't right that you should bear your own burden and mine too."

"No; but it *is* right that we should share each other's burdens, Frank. If other people vexed you, and you brought only the ill-tempers home to us which you durstn't vent upon them, it would be a different matter. Poor Mary Enfield has to bear the brunt of whatever goes amiss; but my husband tries to give me the largest share of all that is pleasant, and keeps the troubles to himself."


After this, could Frank keep silence? No: he told all to his good wife, and she wisely strove to allay the feeling of vexation caused by unprovoked insult, and encouraged her husband in his resolution to do what was right, at any cost to himself, and leave the rest to Him who orders all things well.

No wonder that the cloud soon disappeared from Frank's face, and that he forgot, in the gentle attentions of his faithful wife, and in listening to the innocent prattle of his children, the irritation of the previous hour. While he sat in his bright and cheerful though humble home, Harry Enfield repaired to his favourite corner in the tap-room, where, amid the renewed applause of his companions, he rehearsed how he had paid off that Frank Johnson for telling tales to their master.

Before we put out our light for the night, we will take a peep into the place which Enfield called home.

CHAPTER III.

A TERRIBLE EVENING IN ENFIELD'S COTTAGE
—THE UNKNOWN DELIVERER.

HE year was drawing to its close, and, though not frosty, the weather was raw and cold; but Harry Enfield's hearth-stone reflected no cheerful blaze. Instead of glowing with genial heat, it was only just visible by the gleam of the few dull, red cinders which barely covered the bottom of the grate. It was not late, but Mary Enfield, after giving her children their meagre supper, put them to bed; and they—poor little ones!—were glad to go, rather than run the risk of being in the way when their father should come in.

It is horrible to have to picture children shrinking in dread from the parent whose

relationship has been chosen as a type of that which exists between our heavenly Father and us, the creatures of his hand, the children of his bounty. But, unhappily, it is no uncommon picture.

Mary Enfield's heart was heavy, as she busied herself in caring for the wants of her young family, but her eyes were dry. The luxury of tears belongs not to those whose sorrows and trials are of every-day occurrence. The fountain of *her* tears had run dry long ago.

For a time Mary Enfield occupied herself in repairing her children's clothes,—in putting on a string here and a button there, or in darning the rent in pinafore or frock. These matters ended, she went to the door and listened for the footsteps which she wished, yet feared, to hear. There was not a sound to be heard, except the moaning of the wind in the trees; and, as Mary stood shivering in the night-air, she felt all the loneliness and bitterness of her position. She could catch a

glimpse of the light in Frank Johnson's cottage-window, and, in fancy, she pictured the scene within,—the cheerful, sober husband, the wife forgetting her bodily pain in her wedded happiness, the little children sleeping peacefully, well warmed, well fed, and perhaps smiling as, in dreams, there came back to them the memory of the good-night kiss so lately given.

Mary could hardly bear to look into her own dwelling after gazing on this picture, which she knew to be no ideal one; though now she was not permitted by her wayward husband to hold any friendly communication with Elizabeth Johnson, her own old school-fellow and early companion. But her thoughts wandered to another scene, which she knew to be equally real with the one she had already glanced at. This time she pictured the well-lighted tap-room at the Wheatsheaf, in which her husband would be sitting, spending the money that ought to pass into her hands to find fuel, food and clothes. Oh, it was hard,

very hard, to picture these senseless revels, and to think of the pinching that must follow!

“Should I bring him home?” thought Mary. “If I could save something, it would be worth trying for, at any rate.”

She hesitated still; for the bitter memory of coarse words, and even blows, that she had brought upon herself by a similar effort, made her pause. But the cold, wintry wind was the means of nerving her to make the attempt; for, as it blew her thin garments aside, she was reminded of what her children would have to suffer unless she could procure warmer clothing for them than any they possessed.

Mary Enfield passed into the cottage again, looked at the children to see that they were asleep, satisfied herself that no danger was to be apprehended from the few smouldering cinders in the grate, and then, after having extinguished her candle, she sallied forth. She left the door unlocked, in case her husband should come; for there were two ways which led to the Wheatsheaf, and she might

miss him. In any case, there was little under the cottage roof to tempt any person to enter. When she reached the end of the street, she hesitated which way to take, and then turned in the direction by which Harry usually came. But it chanced that she missed him. Harry had thought fit to escort one of his companions home; for it often happens that men in his condition, while thoroughly sensible of the inability of another to take care of himself, have a ludicrous—or what would be ludicrous if it were not saddening and disgusting—notion of their own superior wisdom and discretion. Thus, while Mary was hastening in one direction, her husband was reeling homeward by the other road, and reached the cottage about five minutes after she quitted it.

The first outbreak of the drunkard was one of anger; and bitter and blasphemous words passed his lips because the house was cold-looking and cheerless and no bright blaze shone on the hearth. He did not stay to consider by whose fault not only the cheerful

blaze was wanting in the grate, but the light of household love itself was almost quenched. He only blamed his absent wife for what she was powerless to prevent or amend.

With some difficulty Harry managed to steady himself so far as to rake together the glimmering embers and obtain a light. But he did not notice that, instead of throwing the lighted paper into the grate, as he intended, he had cast it in quite a different direction, and that it had set fire to the heap of little garments which his wife finished mending before she left the house. One idea, however, he managed to entertain. It was his favourite notion of "paying off" those who offended him; and he succeeded in fastening the door, in order to keep his wife out in the cold until he should think fit to admit her. "She went out without my leave," he said to himself, "but she won't get in without it."

Then he reeled into the next room,—for the cottage consisted of two rooms on the same

floor, and one little chamber above,—and threw himself on the bed, to sleep off the effects of his evening at the Wheatsheaf. But the man never noticed that the fire he had kindled was smouldering among the clothes upon the chair.

The lane in which the cottage stood was not much frequented, and Harry Enfield's dwelling was the only one in it. Mary Enfield's first wedded home was of a different description from the tumble-down place in which she had lately lived. It had, however, the merit of being let at a very low rent, and, being a solitary cottage, she was enabled to hide in it the trials and poverty which she could ill bear for her neighbours—those who had known her in brighter days—to guess at, much less see.

In the mean while, Mary had hurried towards the Wheatsheaf; but when she reached its threshold she lingered, half afraid to cross it. The wintry wind blew keenly, and she drew her old shawl more closely round her

as she stood on tiptoe and tried to peep in at the tap-room window. But the blind fitted closely, and, though she could hear the voices of the revellers within, she could not distinguish any person, or, amid the confusion of tongues, detect that of her husband.

As Mary stood, undecided what to do, a man came out of the house; and, finding that he was sober, she ventured to ask if her husband was in the tap-room.

"Oh, Mrs. Enfield, is that you? Harry is not there: he started for home some time since, I know, for I met him on my way here."

"It's very strange," replied Mary, not knowing whether to trust to the truth of the speaker; for she had been deceived more than once at that door. "I came straight from home by the road he mostly takes, and I have seen nothing of him."

"Which way is that?"

Mary told him. "Oh, then, that accounts for it," said the man. "Harry thought he was man enough to see John Dyson home, so

he would go the other road to bear him company."

"John was taking trouble home to *his* poor wife, then," returned Mary, with a sigh, which showed her sympathy for a wife and mother whose lot resembled her own. "And Harry, —how was he?"

"I'm sorry to say there was six of one and half a dozen of the other. Good-night, Mrs. Enfield."

Mary thanked the man for his information, and hastened homeward. She was well aware that if Harry reached the cottage before her she should have to endure a storm of hard words, perhaps blows also, as a punishment for her absence. As she turned into the lane, she observed with surprise a bright light shining from the cottage-window, and her heart began to beat with terror, which was not decreased when she reached her poor home. She tried the door. It was fast. She looked in at the window, but could distinguish nothing but clouds of smoke pierced by dart-

ing flames. At once the truth flashed upon her. The half-stupefied man must have come home, and, in obtaining a light, doubtless, had set the place on fire!

A terrible cry burst from the almost frantic woman, as she thought of her little ones whom she had left sleeping peacefully in the upper chamber. With all her strength she shook the door, shrieking the while for help which she would fain have gone to seek; but she was in a manner held to the spot, fascinated by terror and the thought of her children's danger. And of *his* too! Yes; though the man whose name she bore had caused her years of misery, had made her tremble at the sound of his voice, and even left the marks of his cowardly blows upon her person, she would, in that moment of peril, have risked her life to save his. She could forget, or at least forgive, his cruelty; but she could *not* forget that he was the father of her children,—the man to whom, in happier times, she plighted her troth before God's altar.

Her efforts to unfasten the door were useless, and her cries, shrill enough in themselves, were almost drowned in the howling of the wind. But, happily, aid was at hand. Others had noticed the unusual light in Harry Enfield's cottage, and were hastening to the spot.

Among those thus attracted to the burning cottage were Frank Johnson and Mr. Philips. Frank had observed the blaze from his own window, and Mr. Philips, while taking a stroll—as he often did—through the highways and byways of Millfield. Others came in various directions; the door was burst open, and first of all the intoxicated man was roused from his slumber, and dragged literally through the fire into the open air.

But with the preservers entered also the sharp night wind; and those who had saved Harry Enfield hesitated about entering a second time, when they saw the violence of the fire increased to such a fearful extent.

Poor Mary Enfield's cries were pitiful to

hear, as she wrung her hands and called the names of her children. In fact, the thinly-clad woman would have rushed upon certain death, had not friendly hands mercifully restrained her. Even the drunken father was in some degree sobered by the sight of the burning cottage and the thought of his children. One among these—his only boy—was the single object upon whom he lavished caresses; and his love for the lad seemed the sole spark of kind and natural feeling which animated him.

But Harry Enfield, just awakened from his heavy sleep, was in no condition to save the lives of his children, even had it been possible for him to force his way through the flames.

"Is this the only door?" cried Mr. Philips, who was one of the most active in his efforts to extinguish the flames.

"Yes, sir," was the cry of many voices. "And you see the kitchen is all on fire, and the next room too."

"Where are the children?"

“In a little place above; but it has no window, except a glass tile in the roof. It will be well if the smoke doesn't suffocate them before they can be reached.”

These words fell like a death-knell on the poor mother's ear, and, utterly overcome, she fainted. At the moment that she was carried from the spot by sympathizing neighbours, a figure was seen to burst in the lattice-window of the ground-floor bedroom, and then to disappear amid the clouds of smoke that filled it. It was evident that some person—no one seemed to know who—had resolved to make a daring effort for the rescue of the children.

A daring effort it was. The smoke was stifling, and it was at no time an easy matter to bear a child down the crazy steps which led to the little chamber. But the man, who had muffled himself as much as possible to keep off the darting flames, soon reappeared with one child, which was received through the broken window by Mr. Philips.

"You must not try this way again," said that gentleman.

"There is no other," was the rapid reply; and again the man disappeared.

However, a ladder was brought by this time and reared against the wall, and vigorous hands were soon at work tearing off the tiles and making an opening in the roof. They were but just in time. It would have been impossible for the man to retrace his steps through the burning room below; for the flames stopped the way. But he managed to pass the half-stifled children through the opening in the roof, and then he followed himself. A hundred hands were outstretched to receive the children, and they were speedily conveyed to the house which already sheltered their mother.

To describe poor Mary Enfield's joy and thankfulness as, on recovering from her death-like faint, she saw and clasped her children in her arms, would be impossible. The fact that her few worldly possessions were all consumed

seemed a trifling misfortune, and the regret expressed by the neighbours on this account fell on deaf ears. Mary could only feel that but a little while before she had believed her children lost to her, and now, rich in a mother's choicest treasures, she saw them by her side and clasped them, living and safe, to her breast.

Her next wish was to know who had saved her little ones. But to this question no person could give an answer. All had seen the muffled figure of the brave man who risked his own life to rescue theirs; but he had disappeared from the throng unnoticed, and they who looked on had vainly sought him.

There was, however, one who had a suspicion of the truth; and this was Mr. Philips. With his usual liberality, he sought Mary Enfield, and placed in her hand a sum sufficient to obtain present necessities, at the same time exacting a promise that no portion of it should be intrusted to her husband;

and, having further stated that he would see her again on the morrow, he took his leave.

Mary and her children were distributed among the neighbours, and a shelter was also found for the unworthy husband and father, whose besetting sin had caused this destruction and misery and doomed the poor home to utter ruin.

When Mr. Philips left the scene of the fire, he went straight to Frank Johnson's cottage and tapped for admittance. Mrs. Johnson opened the door, and, in answer to his inquiry for her husband, said that Frank was in, but was just going to bed.

"You don't want to let me come within your doors to-night, Mrs. Johnson," said he, in a good-natured voice; "and I think I know why. But tell your good man that I can keep a secret."

Mr. Philips had his own way, as usual. In another minute he was face to face with Frank Johnson; and sundry matters, such as drenched and singed mufflers and clothing, told him that

he was not mistaken when he gave Frank the credit of being the saviour of Harry Enfield's children.

The deed was one after Mr. Philips's own heart; and, seizing the workman's toil-hardened palm, he shook it heartily. "You are a brave man, Frank Johnson," said he. "I have heard a good deal about you, and I knew long ago that you possessed the moral courage which would enable you to endure to be *called* a coward rather than prove yourself a black-guard. But only within the last hour have I found out that you are influenced by the still higher and holier feeling which strengthens you to 'do good to them that hate you.'"

Frank's eyes glistened as he heard these words. He knew that Mr. Philips was somewhat chary of bestowing praise; but, then, he was a man whose uprightness and sincerity made the praise doubly valuable when he was moved to utter it. So Frank thanked him for the expression of his good opinion, and added,—

"It is pleasant to be thought well of, sir, and I don't pretend to be indifferent about anybody's opinion of me. But, still, there are some people's good word that I would rather have than others'; and yours is one that I do value very much."

Mr. Philips smiled. He was pleased at the implied compliment,—though Frank had no idea of paying any. He had simply given utterance to his thoughts.

"I didn't mean for anybody but my wife, here, to know my part in to-night's work," added Frank: "so, if you please, sir, I shall trust to you to say nothing."

"That shall be as you please, Johnson; though why you should wish to make a secret of it, I cannot think. Surely you are not ashamed of having saved the children of the man who has been so long a source of annoyance to you?"

"Oh, no, sir; oh, dear, no! But, for one thing, I think it isn't right to make a fuss about it, if I have been able to do a service

in time of need; and, for another, I don't wish Harry Enfield to feel tied to be civil to me just on account of this night's work."

"Now, that is what I call a bit of pride, Johnson. You are too proud to claim from the man who has injured you the gratitude to which you are entitled."

"I tell him so, sir," said Mrs. Johnson. "But he says—and I believe him—that he would have done exactly the same for any person; and therefore he wants no reward but what his own conscience gives him. Still, I know that if I were in Enfield's place I should feel grieved and disappointed if I were not allowed the chance of relieving a full heart by at least *saying* my thanks, if I could do nothing else."

"He won't be convinced: I can see it in his face. Neither your reasons nor mine will weigh with him, Mrs. Johnson. I will keep your secret, Frank, and no one shall know, unless you choose to tell, that you were the hero of to-night. I shall leave you now; but

I mean to have a long talk with you some day soon."

Mr. Philips left the house, and Frank Johnson went to his well-earned rest. On the following day Harry Enfield and his family became the tenants of another cottage; and, out of pity for his wife, a subscription was entered into to furnish the new abode with necessaries. In some degree awed by the peril he and his children had passed through, and conscience-stricken at the thought that he had nearly been their murderer, Harry went to his work with a determination to resist the fascinations of the Wheatsheaf and to care more for his own true interests. He even so far opened his heart to Mary as to tell her that he regretted the past, and said, with a shudder, that if he had caused the death of his children he should have been the most miserable wretch on the face of the earth.

It was long since Mary had heard a kind word from her husband's lips; and she re-

joiced, but with trembling, as the glad sound reached her ears. "If he can but keep to his resolution!" she thought: "O God, give him strength to do it." Like a wise woman and true wife, she resolved to make no allusion to the past, and to utter no word of reproach. "I shall be too thankful to forget it," said she to herself; "and I pray that Harry may forget it too, and all the evil which belonged to it."

CHAPTER IV.

AN UNEXPECTED PROPOSAL, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.



AMONG Mr. Philips's especial hobbies was a perfect passion for "giving people a lift," as he expressed it. Having himself risen from a comparatively humble position to the possession of wealth, his warmest sympathies always went with the self-made men and those who were struggling to rise in the social scale. And wherever he saw one of these strugglers in need of a helping hand, he was just the one to hold it out. "I will do my very best to aid those who are willing to help themselves," he would say; "but I will have nothing to do with him who waits for another to do his own share of the work."

At this particular time Mr. Philips had taken it into his head to help Frank Johnson. He considered that if any man had the qualities which rendered him a suitable person to receive a lift, it was Frank Johnson; and, in accordance with this notion, Frank had a summons to Sunny Lee.

"Can you spare time to have a talk with me, Johnson?" asked Mr. Philips, when Frank came into his office.

"Yes, sir; certainly I can."

"Sit down, then. Not just by the door, man. Draw your chair near the table and the fire. I shall want to see your face while I am talking to you."

Frank lifted his eyes towards the eccentric speaker, and showed by his straightforward look and the broad smile on his countenance that he was not afraid of its expression being scrutinized.

"That's right. And, now, how do you get on at Mr. Aldridge's?"

"Pretty well, sir, thank you. Work is

regular and wages are good. I have no fault to find with his conduct towards me."

"And Enfield:—how does he behave?"

"He has been quite steady ever since the fire, sir; and, though he is very close-tempered with me, he doesn't often taunt me now; and, if he did, I could bear it better."

"Ay, the voice within tells you a pleasant tale, which makes taunting words fall harmless. But I must talk about something else. Were you ever a master-workman, Johnson?"

"Never, sir. My father was; and when my brother and I were youths working together, we used to think that we should try to save money and start together in the old place. However, we both married early, and had families to support: so the plan fell through."

"And your brother,—what became of him? I am not asking from impertinent curiosity, I assure you."

"I never supposed you were, sir; and I am quite willing to tell you any thing about me or mine. My brother is dead. He left a

widow and three children; but they make a living now. She keeps a little shop, works hard, and trains the youngsters to do the same." Frank did *not* tell how much of his hard earnings had gone to aid in the furnishing of the little shop.

"Have you given up the idea of going into business, then, Johnson?"

"Pretty nigh, sir. My father used to say, sometimes, that each member of a family must not expect to begin where their parent left off. He was a working-man himself before he was a master."

"But you would like to have a little business of your own?"

"I won't deny that, sir; but it will not do for me to sit down and think what I should like. Instead of that, I work, and make the best of what we have to do with. It is something to feel that we have thrown away no opportunities and wasted no part of our little means."

"It is a great deal, Johnson. But, suppos-

ing now that you had a friend who was willing to advance money, and thus enable you to make a start for yourself: do you think you could make business pay? I don't mind telling you that I was not always a rich man; in fact, I was a poor one when I was young. Well, in those days I had a kind helping hand stretched out to me. I never could repay him who extended it; for, however we may get rid of mere money obligations, we cannot always give back what is better,—the goodness which prompted the offer of help. So now, if I look around me and see that I can aid one who is poor, as I was aided in those old times, I feel it a great pleasure to do it. It is meting *to a struggling man* the same measure I received *as a struggling man*. Frank Johnson, there seems to be room for you a step higher; and if my hand can pull you up, you may count upon it. I will lend you some money at a low rate of interest, and you shall return it to me in whatever sums you please."

Frank could scarcely believe his ears when he heard these words. He was, indeed, quite overpowered by this unexpected proposal. He tried to thank Mr. Philips in suitable terms, and signally failed,—as most people do when their hearts are full. But there is a language apart from that of words, and Mr. Philips could read Frank's gratitude in his honest face.

“You shall not give me an answer to my proposal to-night, Johnson. Take it home with you. Consider what sum would be needful, and make your calculations. Then let me know the result. You will not find me going back from my promise.”

Frank hardly knew how he got home, laden with such strange tidings; and, until he was fairly talking it over with his wife and hearing her exclamations of surprise, he could scarcely imagine this new prospect to be real.

Whether he accepted Mr. Philips's offer will be best understood by a peep into Mr. Aldridge's parlour, a few days after it was made.

"What do you think is Mr. Philips's last crotchet?" said the builder to his wife.

Mrs. Aldridge looked inquiringly into her husband's face, and had no trouble in reading there this fact,—that, whatever the crotchet might be, it was something excessively distasteful to her lord and master.

Her husband waited for no answer, but continued:—"I am going to lose my best man through this new whim."

"What! Frank Johnson?"

"The very same. Frank told me this morning that he was going to leave me in a few days,—in fact, on Saturday night week. I was both surprised and annoyed, and naturally wished to know the why and the wherefore."

"And how is it, John?" asked Mrs. Aldridge.

"He is going to set up in business for himself."

"You surprise me. I never supposed that Frank had been able to save money for any such purpose."

"I said the very same thing to him at

once; and he frankly told me that a gentleman had offered to advance him the necessary capital at such a reasonable rate of interest as to give him a chance of making a very fair start. He did not name Mr. Philips, but I am quite sure he is the man. It will be well for Frank if he finds himself in a better position as a master, with borrowed capital, than as a workman, with good wages. I consider Mr. Philips has served me a shabby trick, in inducing one of my men to set up in opposition to me."

"But, John, I don't suppose Mr. Philips thought about opposing you. You know he likes to help persons whom he thinks deserving; and Frank is a worthy, steady fellow. Besides, when Mr. Philips assisted a person in another line of business, just in the same manner as you say he is going to help Frank, you were one of the first to praise his kindness and liberality."

"That was a very different matter," retorted Mr. Aldridge, hastily.

Mrs. Aldridge would not attempt to argue on the subject, because she knew that the only real difference between the two cases was this. In the former her husband was merely a looker-on, who, having no interest in the matter, could praise the generosity of Mr. Philips; but in the present instance that gentleman's patronage of Frank Johnson would take away from John Aldridge a valued hand, who would also be elevated to the place of a business rival. However, as usual, Mrs. Aldridge strove to spread the oil of her good temper on the angry waves of her husband's troubled mind, and only replied, "*You* will not suffer by Frank's advancement, my dear. You have always more work offered than you can undertake; and I am sure you will wish poor Frank God-speed."

"Oh, I wish him well; of course I do," was the answer, but given in a tone which seemed to say that the very wish was a prophecy against its fulfilment. "But *I* should not like to start in business under

such circumstances. Frank will never make it answer."

"Did you advise him not to try the experiment?"

"Not I. I once thought of saying a word or two, and of offering him higher wages to remain; but I considered that I should get no credit by it. Perhaps I should next have heard that I had a selfish motive in giving the advice. So I held my tongue, and told Frank that he was quite at liberty to leave me when he chose. I fancy he would like to take a share in my business; but that he shall never do while I live."

Mrs. Aldridge thought that Frank Johnson would make an admirable partner, and that, if he had a small share in her husband's business, his steadiness, energy of character and perseverance would have infused new life into it. It was, however, another of her husband's hobbies to reign alone in his own department: so it was of no use to name that thought of hers to a man who was predetermined not to listen.

There were comments passed upon Frank's new prospects in the workshop, as well as in the parlour. Most of the men were heartily rejoiced that the eccentric owner of Sunny Lee had chosen so worthy a fellow and given him a chance of bettering his position. Dick Halliday gave Frank's hand a grip which made the sturdy workman's arms tingle again, as he offered his good wishes. There was not a particle of envy in Dick's composition; and he was well contented to see his friend lifted a step higher on the social ladder than himself.

But it was with a very different feeling that Harry Enfield heard the news. "So *that* was what he was fawning and cringing on old Philips for," said he, on the Saturday night which saw Frank take leave of Mr. Aldridge's workshop. "I thought he was not so smooth-tongued for nothing while he was at Sunny Lee. He finds that sort of conduct pay. Well, no matter, so long as we are rid of him. I always hated to work under the same roof

with that cowardly fellow, who was always pretending to be too good for our company."

"Not *ours*, Harry," interposed Halliday, with a significant smile.

"For mine, then: we'll put it in plain words."

"And if he did pretend to be too good for your company, he was not so far wrong. You were certainly not a 'bird of his feather.' Only he did not *pretend* at all. He *really* was all he professed to be. He didn't say much, for he had as little of the bragging spirit in him as any man I know; but he had his own notions of what was right, and he acted up to them. I know what book he took his notions from, Harry Enfield; and, though I'm not half as good a fellow as Frank is, I do remember the time when my dear old mother taught me from that book. And I'm not ashamed to say that I owe all that is true and just and good in me to Bible teachings."

"So you are going to succeed Frank as

preacher, are you? *It isn't right* to elect yourself to such an office."

There was a smile among the workmen at the absurd resemblance to Frank Johnson's tone and manner, as Harry uttered the last words; and honest Dick Halliday reddened a little at the idea of his setting up for a preacher.


"I'll preach none," said he; "not I. Frank has my best wishes, and I hope good luck will attend him. Mr. Philips will not be mistaken in him."

"No," muttered Enfield. "He'll find out the truth of the old proverb, 'Set a beggar on horseback—'"

Mr. Aldridge's entrance at this moment prevented the conclusion of this old proverb, —which, however, nobody but the speaker would have applied to Frank Johnson.

CHAPTER V.

UPS AND DOWNS IN BUSINESS—A FORMIDABLE
RIVAL.

OR the next two or three weeks Frank Johnson's mind and body were both fully employed in preparing for a start. It was to be a modest, unpretending sort of beginning, but the site of his business premises was well chosen. Mr. Philips had himself marked out the spot, as the most suitable one in Millfield,—always excepting John Aldridge's,—before he made the offer of money to Frank. The premises were taken, therefore, and fitted up, and respectably furnished with a small but well-chosen stock of thoroughly seasoned wood.

Mr. Philips gave Frank his first job, as he

had promised to do; and before that was finished other employment was offered.

The new master-builder was in high spirits. "I believe I shall be lucky," he said to his wife; "and I shall be both glad and thankful for your sake, more than for my own; because if things do go well with me, you will not have to work so hard."

In the joy of his heart, Frank saw his good wife no longer plodding at her household work unaided, but sitting, like Mrs. Aldridge, in her comfortable parlour, with some one to take the heavier labours off her hands. He told his wife what he hoped; and she, not willing to damp the eager anticipations of prosperity which were all for her sake, smilingly thanked him for his loving thoughts, but said, "That day-dream of yours must only come true when we are out of debt, working with our own money. At the best, we cannot expect to pay Mr. Philips in less than four years."

To his wife's remark Frank Johnson will-

ingly assented. "Yes, we must go on in the old fashion," he said. "It wouldn't be right to go to any extravagance; for it would be extravagance if we did it at the expense of my kind helper. But I shall try to keep the end in view, and make my picture something real."

Frank did thus work, and two years of the time passed prosperously. He found himself in a position to pay Mr. Philips one-half of the sum he had loaned him, and he went up to Sunny Lee for that purpose.

"This is gratifying, Johnson,—very gratifying," said Mr. Philips. "But now, tell me, have you this money clear without lessening your capital?"

"Yes, sir. I calculate that my present stock and certain debts that are due to me are equal to the whole sum you loaned me; that is, without what I now bring you."

"Very good. You have not disappointed me. But, now, wouldn't it be better for you to keep this money, and to go on paying the

same interest for it, so as to extend your business a little?"

Frank thought a minute or two, and then answered, "Upon the whole, sir, I think I would rather not. I have made a living, and something over; and I feel that I should like better to—to——"

"To have a small capital of your own, than a large one of somebody else's? Speak out, man, if that's what you mean: I shall not be offended."

"You have just said my thoughts, sir. So, with many thanks, I will pay this money in."

The money was paid accordingly; and Mr. Philips, who was rather fond of boasting of the success of his favourites, in order to vindicate his own conduct with regard to them, did not fail to speak of Frank Johnson's. It was well known all over Millfield that Frank owed his start to Mr. Philips; and Millfield folks were soon equally well informed as to the progress he had made in business

matters. In fact, when Mr. Philips paid the sum he had just received from Frank Johnson into the banker's hands, he told that gentleman how entirely his humble friend had answered his expectations. "He is a man to be trusted," said he, in an energetic tone. "He has not only worked well, but he had the courage to refuse this money—the half of what I lent him—when I offered to let him keep it and extend his business therewith."

It was not often that Mr. Philips spoke without noticing of whom his audience consisted; but on this particular occasion he was a little excited, and not a little pleased at Frank's conduct in the matter of the loan. As the banker was expressing his pleasure at hearing so good an account of one in whom Mr. Philips was interested, he gave a meaning glance towards the other end of the counter. There stood John Aldridge, looking any thing but gratified at what he had accidentally overheard. His back was towards Mr. Philips

when that gentlemen entered, and thus it happened that he did not recognize Johnson's former employer, or probably he would have paused before speaking so freely of Frank's affairs in his presence. Now, however, the thing was done, and Mr. Philips, reading the look of annoyance on the builder's face, strove to mollify him by at once including him in the conversation. Of late, be it known, there had been little communication between these two; for John Aldridge always tacitly resented Mr. Philips's interference with the affairs of his former workman, and looked upon himself as having sustained personal injury thereby.

When, therefore, Mr. Philips bade the builder good-morning, and said, "I was speaking of Frank Johnson, Aldridge: I have no doubt you will be glad to know of his well-doing," the answer he received was cold and dry. "Frank Johnson is a lucky man, from what you say, Mr. Philips."

"Not lucky, Aldridge. I don't consider

that steadiness and good conduct and hard work can be called luck. I am no believer in that word. Frank Johnson is prospering; but his success has not come and found him idly waiting for fortune to drop down upon him from the clouds in a sort of golden shower. It came because he worked for it and won it."

"There are some that work hard, Mr. Phillips, and yet never win it," was the reply.

"There are; there are, Mr. Aldridge. Some persons seem destined to work a lifetime through and yet make no progress. Trials come in abundance, but not prosperity. Ah, well, of such we can but say that they must look beyond this world for the reward which has not recompensed their labour here. But mind you, Mr. Aldridge, I believe there would be fewer of these aching hearts, these vain toils,—vain so far as earth is concerned,—if those whose lines have always fallen in pleasant places were to stretch out a hand to help a poor brother to walk beside them and share

in the goodly heritage, instead of jealously striving to hinder rather than aid. I am no advocate for doing men's work for them; but I would help the self-helper."

Mr. Philips spoke warmly and eagerly, as was his way, and simply expounded his own views, without in the least intending to attack those of John Aldridge himself. But the latter merely said he did not wish to enter into any argument on the subject, and went his way, having taken as an intentional insult the words which had been uttered in all single-heartedness by Mr. Philips. "Frank Johnson is growing rich," he remarked to Mrs. Aldridge; and to her he also repeated the words of Mr. Philips, adding, "I think he might have been contented without insulting *me*. I'm a quiet, easy-going man when people let me alone; but I can understand these side-hits as well as anybody else. I know what Mr. Philips meant when he talked of the duty of those whose lines had fallen in pleasant places, and of their hindering others through

jealousy from walking beside them. I suppose he considers that I ought, because I began with a decent capital, to set up my men in business and turn them all into masters. I never have stood in Frank Johnson's way yet; but perhaps he'll not make quite so much in the next two years."

Frank did not hear this implied threat. Mrs. Aldridge was the only person present when her husband gave vent to his gathering wrath, and she, hoping it would be forgotten, alluded to it no more. But, though Frank did not hear it, he felt its effects before many days had passed.

It had always been remarked of Mr. Aldridge that, though his work was admirable, he would have his price for it. He was too well off to care for taking contracts where there was a prospect of only a small margin of profit. On several occasions he and Frank Johnson had sent in estimates for work, and those of the latter had been accepted, on account of their being somewhat lower. But

after that conversation at the bank, Mr. Aldridge's conduct in this respect changed.

"We'll see now," said he to himself, "whether Johnson's purse will hold out against mine, or whether his friend will fill it up for him again. I'm not going to be called jealous for nothing."

After this thought passed through his mind, Mr. Aldridge took a paper out of his desk, and began making sundry alterations thereon. It was the estimate for the erection of a new school-house and school-master's residence, which was to be sent in the next day. "I thought your calculations were made, John," said his wife, as she saw him moodily but busily engaged in writing.

"They were; but I had some talk with Bateman, the bricklayer, who is to join me in estimating, and he is willing to lower his terms a little. I mean to do the same. Frank Johnson is not going to have it all his own way."

Mrs. Aldridge was sorry to see that her

husband was animated by an uncharitable spirit; but in business matters she had no power to influence him.

The estimates went in, and Mr. Aldridge's offer was accepted, as it was found to be the lowest. Every person present was surprised, and could scarcely believe that there was no mistake. No one was more astonished than Frank Johnson, when he knew for what sum Mr. Aldridge had undertaken the work. He spoke of it to his wife when he got home, feeling somewhat disappointed, as he had calculated on having the contract himself. "It cannot pay Mr. Aldridge," said he. "He may be secured from loss, but he cannot get a sixpence by the job; for the money will barely pay for materials and labour."

But time after time the same thing occurred, and Frank Johnson found that it was useless to send in an estimate if Mr. Aldridge did so. Then he saw himself compelled, by this unaccountable and unexpected rivalry, to work for less than he had hitherto done.

The end of another year found him a trifle poorer than the beginning had done. After the interest of that part of Mr. Philips's money which he still retained was paid, he had barely made a living.

"I feel rather discouraged," said he to his faithful wife. "I have worked harder than ever this year, and yet I have not laid by one penny towards paying off the rest of the debt. I can't help thinking that Mr. Aldridge has made up his mind to ruin me."

The large drops of perspiration stood on Frank's face, as he pictured the downfall of his rising hopes, and his eventual failure in trade; and—poor fellow!—his old phrase dropped from him, "*It isn't right.*"

It was not right in Mr. Aldridge. It was not what Frank would have done had their situations been reversed.

"Never mind, Frank," whispered his wife. "If your suspicions *are* correct, we must just work on, and trust still in Him who is above all other masters. And, from what I know

of Mr. Aldridge, he will be sorry some day for having tried to injure you."

"It will be poor consolation for me, Elizabeth, if I am a ruined man, with capital and credit lost, and all my plans for home comfort upset into the bargain."

This was unanswerable. And, indeed, the effects of Mr. Aldridge's decided opposition were felt in many ways by Frank Johnson's household. His two sons—fine, intelligent lads, on whom it had been his wish to bestow a good education—were taken from the school at which they had lately been placed, and sent to a less expensive one. "I wanted to give them good schooling," sighed the father, "for that nobody could take from them; but they will have to do with less than I reckoned on."

It happened that Harry Enfield's only son and namesake was a pupil at the inferior school; and he mentioned to his father the return of his former school-mates to their old desks again.

"So they've come back to your school, have

they?" said his father, with a look of satisfaction. "That tells a tale that's easy enough to read. Master Johnson isn't going to get rich all at once. I thought old Aldridge meant to clip his wings for him; and he's done it already. And old Philips won't go bragging that he has got all his cash back in a hurry, I've a notion, though he was so mighty fussy about the wonders Frank Johnson had done in two years." Then, turning to his boy, he asked him if he should like to go to a better school.

The lad, of course, answered that he should. "But we can't afford it, father, can we?" he eagerly inquired. "Frank and Willy Johnson have come back to ours; and you say their father can't pay for them at that other, and *he's* in business for himself."

"And your father isn't. Never mind, Harry, my boy. A working-man's money is as good as Frank Johnson's, any day; and we'll see if we can't afford it."

Mary Enfield could hardly believe her ears.

Her husband had been much steadier since the affair of the fire, and, though he had at times indulged rather freely, he had never been helplessly intoxicated as on that occasion. Still, he had made no great efforts for the comfort of his home or advancement of his children, and, in her wildest dreams, she never thought he would care to educate them well. But, after this conversation with his boy, Harry removed his son to the higher school which the little Johnsons had left, and even sent his girls to another. Nay, more: he worked over-hours, and paid their school-bills when due. Yet it was not so much from a desire to benefit his own flesh and blood as *to let that Frank Johnson see that he could afford to give his children good schooling without having old Philips to back him.*

Mary was thankful (as what mother would not be?) that any thing had moved her husband to care for his children's instruction. But she understood his motive, and feared that this new outbreak of paternal zeal would

not be lasting, and that he would soon tire of devoting the earnings of his extra working-hours to them.

Perhaps her forebodings would have been realized, had not Harry Enfield fallen into a wonderful stroke of luck, as he called it, which rendered him less dependent on his daily labour.

CHAPTER VI.

HARRY ENFIELD'S STROKE OF LUCK—WILL
IT PROVE TO BE ONE?



ONE Saturday morning Mr. Aldridge was summoned from home on business which would detain him until the middle of the following week. Before he left, he arranged for his active little wife to take his place in the counting-house and pay the men when they came for their wages at night. This was a thing Mrs. Aldridge liked very much; for she could thus see each of the workpeople, and make such inquiries after their wives and children as she knew would please the men themselves. Sometimes, too, she ventured on uttering a word of remonstrance to such as she knew to be neglectful of home; and her

pleadings on behalf of wives and little ones had been blessed before this time, because she threw such heartiness into her tones that they who heard felt her sincerity and felt also that she spoke for their good. Somehow, too, the men liked to see the bright-eyed, active little dame perched at the high desk and giving forth with pleasant smiles the fruits of their week's toil. Yet, little as was Mrs. Aldridge, and insignificant as was her appearance, the big fellows, who would have looked boldly at her husband and listened carelessly when he reproved them, dropped their eyes and were uneasy under this woman's gentle pleadings in the cause of right.

Fancy little Mrs. Aldridge at her post, paying out money, and taking account of what she paid in the most business-like fashion. And fancy, if you like, Harry Enfield's entrance to receive his wages. He was the last comer; and though he had only left his work a couple of hours before, and was sober

at that time, he now came into the counting-house with flushed face and staggering gait. Mrs. Aldridge observed this, and put on her most severe expression of face with which to greet the delinquent. She retained the money in her hand, and resolved to try the effect of a little womanly eloquence before she allowed Harry to walk off to the Wheatsheaf with his wages.

"I'm very sorry to see you in such a state, Enfield," she began. "I hoped you had turned over a new leaf and meant to keep steady. You should think about Mary and the youngsters, and not fill the landlord's pocket with what ought to be taken home to your wife."

"I work for my money, Mrs. Aldridge, and I suppose I have a right to do what I like with it," returned Enfield, in a defiant manner, which he had never before assumed when speaking to her.

"Certainly, Enfield; but you know my way, and I can't help saying a word. I am a wife

and mother, and I feel for other wives and mothers."

"All right, ma'am," said Harry, with a mock deferential bow; "but, as I don't allow my own woman to lecture me, I don't see why anybody else should do it: so please to give me my money and let me go. I want twelve dollars,—my week's pay,—and a dollar for over-work. I'm in a hurry, too."

"If I thought you were in a hurry to go home to Mary, I should hasten you still more; but I doubt you want to be in the tap-room corner. I really don't think I shall give you the money to-night,—at any rate, not all of it; for I know it will go like chaff before the wind, and Monday morning will see you without a penny."

"You don't mean to give me my wages, then, ma'am?"

"Not all. Here is half what is due you. Take it, and on Monday, when you come to work, you will feel glad that you have the rest to receive, instead of having squan-

dered it, you can't tell how, at the public-house."

"So you mean that, ma'am, do you?"

"Yes: one word is as good as a thousand. I won't give you another penny to-night," said Mrs. Aldridge.

The little woman was alone in the counting-house, and she knew well that, if that stalwart man chose, he could take by force what she refused to give. But, dauntless as usual, she suited her actions to her words, and, placing the remainder of the money in the desk, she shut the lid, and with a rapid movement locked it and put the key in her pocket.

Harry Enfield saw and understood what her motions meant, and he laughed mockingly. "Don't be alarmed, ma'am," said he: "the money is quite safe where you've put it. I sha'n't try to take it, though it is my own lawful earnings. I'll send for the balance on Monday morning, for I don't mean to come for it. I've done my last stroke of work here,—for the present, at any rate. You may

tell Mr. Aldridge so, with my best compliments, and thanks for past favours. He's not a bad sort of man; and I'll say that either before his face or behind his back, and I ought to know. But I've had a stroke of luck, Mrs. Aldridge. Here, read that," he added, placing an open letter on the desk, "and then see if you think I need care twopence about to-night's wages. No,—not if I never get 'em."

Surprised at the man's manner, and perhaps moved by a little natural curiosity, Mrs. Aldridge read the letter, which was as follows:—

"MR. HENRY ENFIELD.

"SIR:—Under the will of your wife's late uncle, Mr. Samuel Hardy, she is entitled to a legacy of two thousand dollars, which will be paid to her, free of duty, according to the expressed wish of the testator, as soon as the usual arrangements can be made. A further sum of two thousand dollars is bequeathed to

your children; but only the interest will be available until the youngest is of age.

“Awaiting a communication from you, we remain, sir, your obedient servants,

“PROSSER & KEAN.”

After reading the above, Mrs. Aldridge felt that it would matter little whether Enfield took away only the half or the whole of his week's wages. The man's boastful, mocking manner towards herself was fully explained, as the prospect of possessing so much would make *him* feel rich. Mrs. Aldridge handed him back the letter, saying, “I sincerely hope, Enfield, that this legacy will prove a stroke of luck. It will, if well used, add greatly to your means and home comforts; but no luck will result from it unless you be steady and industrious still. Remember, it does not make you independent of work. And let me beg of you, since this money comes to you through your wife, to let *her* feel the benefit of it. It will be a curse, in-



stead of a blessing, if it lead you again into folly, sin and dissipation."

"Thank you, ma'am, for your advice; you mean well, I'm sure," said the half-tipsy man, moved, in spite of himself, by the speaker's earnest tone. "And I should like for us to part friends, for all you won't give me my due; though it makes no matter, for anybody will give me credit, with this security in my possession." And he slapped the pocket which contained the letter, with an air of infinite satisfaction. "You won't shake hands, then?" He had extended his hand to Mrs. Aldridge with tipsy familiarity as he made the allusion to "parting friends;" but Mrs. Aldridge indignantly drew back.

"If you had come here sober, and told me of your good fortune, I would have shaken hands with you right willingly, while I wished you well. I *do* wish you well as it is, with all my heart; but my hand must not be extended to you, under present circumstances.'

There was something so truly dignified in

the little woman's manner, that Harry Enfield shrank back abashed, left the counting-house without any further remark, and staggered homewards.

As he entered the cottage, his wife's tearful face excited his wrath. "What is the stupid woman crying about?" said he. "Mary, I think there is something to laugh at, instead of whining about the place in that fashion. *I sha'n't cry*, I reckon, unless another letter comes to tell me that this isn't true." And he waved the paper round his head in triumph.

"Oh, Harry," returned his weeping wife, "how can I help crying when I think of my poor uncle's goodness? If I could but have seen him and heard him say that he forgave me for my disobedience, I should not feel this so much."

"I'd a deal rather that a man showed his forgiving spirit by leaving me a bit of brass, than by telling me so and giving somebody else the money. Hold your silly tongue, and don't put me out with your crying."

Mary dried her eyes, and strove to appear more composed; but her heart was heavy within her. The tidings of the legacy, which had raised her husband's spirits to the highest pitch, had filled her heart with sadder and softer feelings. She thought of the time when she, an orphan child, dwelt under the roof of her good uncle, and of the tenderness with which he then supplied a father's place to her. She remembered her happy girlish days before an acquaintance with Harry Enfield cast the first shadow over them. She seemed to hear again the words of advice first, and then the urgent pleadings, by which her uncle strove to dissuade her from uniting her lot with a man destitute of religious principles, and of intemperate habits. Many and many a time after that marriage had separated her from her early home and best earthly friend, did Mary bitterly repent of her own obstinacy, and the separation which it had caused.

And now, after the lapse of many years,

during which she and her uncle had never met, is it wonderful that tears came more readily than smiles when that lawyer's letter brought tidings of this unexpected legacy? It was like a message of pardon from beyond the grave; and Mary's tears *would* flow, and her voice tremble, when she spoke of it, and wished she might but have heard the words of forgiveness from her uncle's lips and once more clasped his hand in hers before the pulse had ceased to beat.

Fortunately, Harry was in too high spirits to be much troubled by his wife's tears. He said, with a coarse attempt at a jest, that she might do the crying for both of them, and, as he had no tears to spare, he could do a double share of laughing. He kissed his children, too, promised them impossible toys and future grandeurs, and, as an earnest, presented each with some of the money received from Mrs. Aldridge. The rest he threw carelessly to his wife, saying that, if he had no more money, he had money's worth

in his pocket; and then, resisting her endeavours to induce him to remain in-doors, he betook himself to the Wheatsheaf, where he read the news of his good fortune to an admiring group of listeners in the tap-room.

How grandly did he reign that night as king of the revels, by virtue of that bit of paper signed by Messrs. Prosser & Kean! With what tipsy condescension did he announce his intention of "*standing treat*"! With what a sense of superiority did he listen to the remarks of those who praised him as a good fellow, and one who, though he had got *a fortune* left him, wasn't too proud to take a glass (a great many times replenished) with old mates, or too greedy to fill theirs! And as such remarks caused Harry to consider his generosity on this score a very praiseworthy act,—in fact, a sort of moral virtue,—he, to sustain his character for liberality, bade the speakers empty their glasses and have them refilled at his expense.

One little incident occurred which rather

marred the conviviality of the evening. A poor, miserable-looking, ill-clad woman, with four ragged and barefooted children, forced her way into the tap-room of the Wheatsheaf. This was Sarah Dyson, the wife of the man whom Harry Enfield accompanied home on the night of the fire.

The landlord of the Wheatsheaf vainly strove to oppose the woman's entrance. Nothing but actual violence could have prevented it; and that it would have been very unwise to employ. It would not do to create a scandal by rough behaviour to a woman who came in search of her husband. So Sally Dyson stood, surrounded by her shivering children, a pitiable group, in the well-warmed, well-lighted tap-room. The place was pretty nearly full; for the tidings of Harry Enfield's liberal doings had sufficed to bring an extra number to the Saturday evening gathering.

But the woman heeded not their presence, or, at least, was not abashed by it. She cast a glance of fierce contempt on the assembly,

and then, in shrill tones, attacked her husband. "Are you not ashamed of yourself, John Dyson," said she, "to sit there drinking, and know that you have not left me a single shilling to buy food for to-morrow? Aren't you ashamed to sit near that bright fire, and know that our hearth at home is cold,—that I have no fuel, and that my children will have to go without food enough the week through, because you spend all in drink?"

There were not many, even of that group, who were quite so bad as John Dyson; for his children were notoriously the most ragged and his home the most wretched in all Millfield; and the men who sat drinking there looked shocked as they heard his wife's accusing voice, and saw her accusation confirmed in the miserable objects before them.

"Whist, Sally! whist!" said John Dyson, fairly cowering before his angry wife. "I haven't spent my wages. I have only paid up the week's score, and the rest——"

"Is not much, I'll be bound. But, little or

much, I have not seen the colour of your money this night; and I'll speak my mind for once, in spite of your '*Whist*, Sally.'"

"But, Sally, now listen. Harry Enfield has been standing treat for me and all the rest."

"More shame for him to do it, and you to take it. Do you think that makes any better of it? Don't I know that *he* has a wife and children at home, who want all he can earn, and more than he'll give them?" again interrupted the shrill-voiced woman, who was resolved not to be pacified, and insisted that her husband should go home then and there.

"But Harry can afford to stand treat for once, Sally," interposed the landlord. "He's had a fortune left him; and I dare say he'll pay for a glass of something to warm you this cold night, if you like to take it."

"With pleasure," returned Harry, with extra politeness; but his words were almost drowned in the response which at the same moment broke from Sarah Dyson's lips:—

"*I take a glass to warm me! I drink of what poisons all my happiness and makes my husband what he is! Look at him there, and look at these children here. I don't want my stomach warming with gin. I want my children's bodies warming with decent clothes, and their feet with shoes. I want coals to warm my hearthstone, and food for all of us. My husband, there, thinks that his beer or his gin will stand in place of clothes, shoes, fire and food; but my bairns and me'll want a deal of teaching before we get *that* lesson off by heart.*"

The woman's appeal was rude enough, and couched in homely language, and her voice was hard and harsh; but the most skilled orator could not have spoken more to the purpose than she did. And where could a painter have found aught to illustrate her harangue so touchingly as did the cowering, shivering, awe-stricken children, with their rags quivering under the motion of their trembling bodies? At any rate, Sally Dyson's

arguments were unanswerable, and of all the hearers there was not one whose conscience did not in some degree reproach him as he thus sat an unwilling listener.

Harry Enfield was the first to break the silence that ensued; for, as he was wont to observe, it took a good deal to make him hold his tongue before either man or woman.

"Didn't you hear that I mean to pay for the drop of drink your husband takes, Mrs. Dyson? The landlord has told you the truth. I've got a fortune left me."

"Then I reckon it's come by some of your wife's kin," said plain-spoken Sally; "for nobody belonging to you was ever worth aught, so they couldn't leave aught."

"That doesn't matter. What's my wife's is mine, and what's mine's my own," retorted Harry, with a rather uncomfortable attempt at jocularitv.

"More's the pity."

"May-be you'll not say so by-and-by, Mrs. Dyson," was the patronizing reply; "for I

wish that my friend John's family, as well as himself, may feel my good fortune. And though you have been so rude, not to say coarse, to me to-night, I mean"—here Harry looked round with the air of a king,—“I mean to make each of your children a present of a pair of shoes; and the shoemaker, there, shall take their measure just now.”

The whole assembly applauded Harry's generosity once more, and declared that he showed a right good spirit, after what Sally had said. A grand clinking of glasses and shaking of hands followed this magnanimous outburst; and the shoemaker, having first drained his particular allowance to the health and continued good luck of Harry Enfield, stepped out of his corner to obey the commands of the hero of that night.

Sally Dyson at first refused to allow him to take the children's measure; but at length she yielded. “It isn't *his* money, by rights,” she said to herself: “it's Mary's. But the poor bairns may as well have the shoes. It

will do them good, and the money is sure to go in drink if I stand out. May-be, after all, the shoemaker'll never make them: so that, anyway, measuring won't do any harm. And if the shoes do come,—why, all the better. I wonder whether Harry has got hold of the money, or only expects it?"

After the shoemaker had done his work and resumed his seat, Harry again pressed his former offer on Sarah Dyson; but still she steadily refused to taste any thing, and urged her husband to come home with her.

"Nay, nay, Sally: that's too bad. Let me enjoy myself when it costs me nothing. You may take the money home: I sha'n't want it to-night," said John Dyson, handing to his wife what remained of his wages, and looking at Enfield as he spoke.

Harry graciously nodded his approval, and Sarah Dyson, feeling that she had fared better than she could have expected to do, was glad to hurry off with her sleepy children, in order that she might get them a meal and put

them to bed before she again sallied forth to make her markets with what remained of John's wages after the landlord's score had been deducted. It was not often—poor soul!—that she had so much to spend; but, after all, it was very little, and she was obliged to think, not of her many wants, but “what can we possibly do without?”

To her surprise, the shoemaker was prompt in executing Harry Enfield's order, and on the following Thursday brought home four pairs of stout shoes for her children.

“I aren't in the habit of working on Mondays, Mrs. Dyson,” said he, with the air of one who had conferred no small favour by breaking through this his established rule. “But I saw how uncommon badly off your youngsters were; and I thought the poor things should have their shoes as soon as possible.”

“I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure. Maybe, though, Harry Enfield may rue that he has ordered the shoes.”

"That doesn't matter a morsel to me, ma'am," returned the shoemaker. "I've plenty of witnesses to prove that he did give me the order, and he'll be forced to pay, whether he likes or no."

Sally's first feeling was one of unmitigated satisfaction when she reflected that what the shoemaker said was correct. Her children were shod, and Harry Enfield *must* pay. Her next thought was, "Yes, but it will be with poor Mary's money,—not his own;" and this idea she did not relish. Forthwith she placed her four youngsters on as many chairs, drew off the shoes, which they were viewing with such delight, and, despite the protestations and tears of the children, she marched off with them in her apron to Harry Enfield's. Only Mary was at home, as it happened; and to her she explained her errand.

"Mary," said she, "may-be you would hear of your husband's goings-on at the Wheat-sheaf last Saturday night, and perhaps some one would tell you that *I* went to take mine

home; for I was so near crazed that it made no matter what I did."

"I did hear about it, Sarah. And, indeed, I didn't wonder. I can feel for you, with all my heart."

"I believe you, and thank you, Mrs. Enfield," returned Sarah Dyson. "As you've heard so much, perhaps you've been told, too, how your husband ordered the shoemaker to measure my poor barefooted bairns for shoes, and that he did it."

"Yes: I did hear of that, too."

"I refused to let him, at first; then, afterwards, I thought most likely they would never really be made, and, if they were, it would be a good thing for the children. However, this afternoon, sure enough, in comes the shoemaker with four pairs of real good strong shoes, and when I put them on the children's feet they fitted beautiful. But, before they'd had 'em on five minutes, I felt uncomfortable. I thought to myself, 'I've no right to take these things, badly as the young

uns want them; for the money that is coming is Mary Enfield's, and he has no right to spend it or squander it in such a way as he began to do on Saturday night.' So I took the shoes off again, and I put them all in my apron, and came to you. Thinks I to myself, 'Mary Enfield sha'n't say that I was the woman to take advantage of her husband's drunken whim for my own gain.' I believe the shoes will fit your children, either now or by-and-by: so there'll be nothing lost, Mary, will there?"

As Sarah Dyson spoke, she poured a little shower of new shoes on to the floor before Mrs. Enfield.

Her hearer's eyes filled with tears as she listened. Ah! she knew well what sort of a scene was enacted at the tap-room revel on the Saturday night, though she did not witness it with her own eyes. Well could she picture her husband's assumption of patronage and authority, and the fawning sots around, who took advantage of his weakness to indulge in their own besetting sin at his ex-

pense. Would these have any after-qualms of conscience? Would they reproach themselves with diminishing the bequest of her good uncle to herself? No, indeed! She knew that the same scene would be repeated whenever an opportunity offered, even though not one penny of that legacy should ever benefit herself, for whom it was intended. And here was this poor woman, with courage and honesty of purpose enough to conquer the temptation offered by her own sore need and—what was harder to bear—the wants of her children, come to tender back what would have made her little ones comfortable, because she could not satisfy herself that it was right to retain it!

Mary did not hesitate a moment as to the answer she should make. Quickly she gathered up the little shoes, and, lifting Sarah Dyson's apron, put them in, and pushed the ends of the apron into her visitor's hand. "Take the shoes back, Sarah; take them back, and my best wishes with them. I hope

your poor children will feel the comfort of them. I wish every penny that was spent in yon place on Saturday night had gone to clothe some poor tattered creatures: then I would never have grumbled, but been thankful. To think, though, that Harry should go and spend in drunken rioting what my poor uncle worked to gather, is hard to bear."

"It *was* your uncle, then, that left the money? I said it was some of your kin, for nobody belonging to your husband ever had any to leave. They were all too much like Harry himself for that. I'm more obliged to you than I can tell you, Mary. It went sorely against me, in one sense, to pull these shoes off the poor little things' feet; and I *can* tell you they *did* cry when they saw me make off with them all in my apron. They were so proud, you know, when they looked at their toes; for it was a fresh thing to have them neatly shod."

Mary Enfield smiled again, and shared in the poor mother's pleasure at the idea of restoring

the coverings to those little feet, and said, "I wish the children health to wear them."

"Thank you a hundred times, Mrs. Enfield; and I'm sure I wish you and yours health to enjoy your fortune."

"It is not a fortune, Sarah. It's two thousand dollars,—which would be a nice thing to fall back upon, but I doubt if I shall ever see a farthing of it. Most likely it will be spent before it comes to hand at all; for if Harry goes on as he has begun, I see no other chance. He had been a good deal steadier for a long time, and taken more care of his children."

"Ah, that fire did him good, I think."

"It did,—a deal. He was so shocked at the idea that he might have caused the deaths of all our children, that he never, till last Saturday night, got into such a stupid, senseless state again."

"How curious it seems, now!" said Sarah, musingly. "One would have thought that for a man to set his house on fire was a piece of bad enough luck; and yet, after all, good

came out of it. And, again, one would think that for a man to get money left him was a piece of good luck; and here it is just bringing back the evil that the other took away."

"That thought has been in my mind many a time since Saturday, I can tell you. But I must just leave it. I can but do my best, and trust in God. My life would have been a dark one if it hadn't been that I could look to Him in my day of trouble."

Sarah assented, and then rose to return to her children. She was just opening the door, when a sudden idea struck her. "Oh, Mrs. Enfield," said she, "did you ever find out who the man was that saved the children when the cottage got on fire?"

"No, Sarah: we never could get to know, though we took pains enough to find out. It was a wonderful thing, and I should have liked to tell that man, whoever he was, what a mother felt towards him; and Harry, queer as he often is, I do believe would have laid down his life for the man that saved his little

lad. But we neither had the chance to say nor do. However, I never kneel down to ask God's blessing for my children, but I ask it for that man that gave them back to me."

It was strange, Sarah Dyson said; and then, after renewed thanks, she hastened home, and restored, with their new shoes, happiness to the hearts and smiles to the faces of her children.

And Mary Enfield sat sorrowfully plying her needle, and thinking of her absent husband,—too proud to work, with the prospect of his "*fortune*" before his eyes, and devoting his idle hours to vice. And, under such circumstances, is it surprising that she considered the coming legacy rather a misfortune than a "*stroke of luck*," and murmured to herself the prayer, "In all time of our wealth, Good Lord, deliver us"?

The money would have been wealth to people in their position, had her husband been willing to work with her; but now she dreaded lest the intended benefit should prove a hidden curse.

CHAPTER VII.

FRANK JOHNSON'S FOREBODINGS, AND HARRY ENFIELD'S WAY OF "TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF."



It must not be supposed that Harry Enfield was without money during these few days. On the contrary, he whose word would not have been accepted as a pledge for the repayment of a few shillings a week ago, now found it an easy matter to borrow. Mine host of the Wheatsheaf, who had ere this declined to trust him another glass of gin or pint of beer, now generously offered to advance Harry the money he might want until his "fortune" should arrive. To be sure, Harry gave his note of hand for it, and the landlord comforted himself for the temporary absence of

the money with the thought that a very little while would see the greater part of it in his hands again, and he should still have it to claim, with interest in addition, when his customer received his fortune.

As a thing of course, Frank Johnson heard of the "stroke of luck," and told the news to his wife. *He* was still struggling unsuccessfully against the powerful trade opposition of his late employer, and feeling more and more convinced that it would end badly for himself. He added no comment after he had made his wife acquainted with the particulars of Enfield's legacy and subsequent conduct, but sat as if absorbed in thought.

She rose, and touched him on the shoulder. "I know what makes you so thoughtful, Frank," she said.

The smile was evidently forced which appeared on Frank's face for a moment, and then faded into the anxious look that had been most common there of late. "You are thinking," she continued, "of the strange

freaks of fortune, Frank. Here is this Enfield, who has wasted so much, and abused past blessings and mercies, suddenly placed in a position to waste still more. He has already begun to do it, you say; and you, who have been a kind husband, a loving father, an honest and industrious man, are struggling against increasing cares and anxieties."

"Ay, wife, you are right. I was just thinking to myself what a blessing such a legacy would have been to me. I could have returned Mr. Philips his money, and had something to spare to pay ready cash, instead of being obliged to incur debts and give notes, and so on. And I felt within my own mind that I should have used such a blessing well. Yet it is given to a man who abuses it, and will benefit nobody, least of all himself, either in body or soul; while I must go on plodding, plodding, from day to day,—often too anxious to sleep when night comes. I was fit to ask myself——"

"Hush, Frank! I know," said his wife, as her pale face turned paler still. "We must not ask ourselves, 'Is it right?' when God permits these things; and you must not take up your old saying, 'It isn't right, in this case.'"

"Still, it is hard to understand; though God knows I do not wish to murmur, even though things go contrary with me at present. I hope I shall be able to do what's right to other people."

"We must strive and trust still, Frank. And, after all, should you like to change places with Harry Enfield, or should *I* like to be his wife? Is he happier, think you, when he goes home reeling from the Wheat-sheaf, even though he may have money in his pocket, than my poor husband with all his anxieties? And poor Mary, as she listens for his footstep, all unsteady as it must be,—is she half as happy as I am, though I have sometimes to share troubles with you that she does not at present know?"

Frank looked in his good wife's face with honest affection and admiration. "God bless you!" said he. "You put things in the true light. A minute since, my heart was full of murmurings, though my tongue didn't say them. Now I am ashamed of myself, and only feel that it isn't right for me to question God's wisdom, goodness or mercy in allowing such things to be, though we poor blind human beings cannot understand them."

"I think we can understand so much in this case, Frank, that you would not like to change places with the man whom you were inclined to envy a little while since."

"No, indeed! not for a hundred times Harry Enfield's 'fortune,' as those poor, sottish companions of his call his wife's little legacy. But, now, to leave his affairs and think of our own. I am losing ground, in spite of all I can do. I have worked hard, and been as economical as possible in business; you have done your part in household matters, and yet I am getting poorer. You see, a man

with a large capital, like Mr. Aldridge, can take his own money in his hand and buy more advantageously than I can. Then, again, that enables him to take contracts on lower terms; and if his money does not come in again exactly at the time expected, he suffers no inconvenience from the delay. With me things are exactly opposite, and I have interest—though not at a high rate, certainly—to pay for a great part of my little capital. If I have to wait and give long credit, I suffer again, for I must pay for that. But why need I tell you this, when you know all my concerns as well as I do myself? Only there is one thing I must say. I doubt whether I was wise in attempting to carry on a business with borrowed capital at all.”

“You did very well for the first two years, Frank.”

“Yes, but then I had not the active opposition to contend against that I have now. And, really, as I look back on the time when I worked through the week and brought

home my wages on the Saturday night, I think I was better off then than I am now: at any rate, I had far less anxiety, and I know we never owed any thing. We made our little do. And now it *is* hard work to get the money together to meet payments, and for the men's wages. Besides, I have always the feeling that I am in debt. I'm sure of this, that if all working-men could taste the anxieties and troubles that attend the carrying on of a business, they would not envy their employers as they often do."

"I believe that, Frank. But, really, now-a-days very few people think of being contented in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them. Everybody seems to be trying to push himself up a bit higher, without thinking whether he is fit for such a place, or if it will make him happier or no."

Frank sat silently thinking for a few moments, and then said, "I can't help feeling uneasy about what Mr. Philips will say."

"Say, Frank! Why, he cannot blame you

for not making money so fast as you did at first."

"But he will blame me for ill success. Mr. Philips is very proud when those he helps do well, but I do not think he would have any sympathy with a man who disappointed his expectations. He succeeded at last, in spite of many difficulties; and I am sure he thinks it is in any man's power to do the same. Mr. Philips has been very kind to me, Elizabeth, but I feel that if I fail in this struggle with the world I shall lose his good will. Not that he will be hard or harsh with me so far as money matters are concerned, but——"

"He will simply withdraw his hand; in fact, *let you go.*"

"That is just my thought."

Frank Johnson's estimate of Mr. Philips's character was a correct one. The sympathies of the proprietor of Sunny Lee went ever with the man who conquered difficulties,—not with him who either allowed them to conquer

him or was compelled to yield before their pressure.

Yet Frank, though depressed, was not utterly cast down. He resolved to make a brave stand against these business difficulties, and not to yield so long as he had a hope of retrieving his position. Only he was equally determined that under no circumstances should Mr. Philips be a loser from the confidence he had reposed in him when, trusting simply to his honesty, he furnished him with the means of beginning business. "No," he said, "I would rather sell off every stick I have than that Mr. Philips should be able to say that Frank Johnson had both disappointed his expectations and abused his confidence. The first he *may* have to say; the last, never."

Perhaps another and less praiseworthy, but equally natural, feeling, might assist in impelling Frank to continue the struggle. After the ungenerous course of conduct latterly adopted by Mr. Aldridge, he did not like to

be driven out of the field by the rivalry of his former master, who, after Frank's faithful service, might have been contented to see him take a little slice out of his own large loaf without grudging it.

As to Harry Enfield, he was not kept out of his fortune long. The legacy was soon paid over to him, and, but for the influence possessed over him by his little son, it would soon have been spent. But, as Mary said, "It was wonderful what notice her husband took of that lad's sayings, and how his father would talk to him about things."

So it fell out that when Harry Enfield, junior, saw his father exulting over the actual possession of the money, his young face became sad, instead of reflecting the mirthful expression of his father's. The boy was a fine sharp lad, and in his young life had seen sorrow enough to make him thoughtful. Besides, since he had enjoyed the society of a better class of boys and the instruction of a superior master, he had learned to think with

shame of his own father's degrading conduct. So now he ventured where the mother durst not interfere by word or deed, and said, "Father, I wish you would stay away from the Wheatsheaf. Don't let the landlord have all the money: it would make us so comfortable at home."

His father turned sharply round to Mary, and said, "*You* set the boy to say this. He would never think of it unless some one put him up to it."

The trembling wife had not time to speak before her boy answered. Stretching himself proudly to his full height, and looking affectionately at his mother's face, and then, unabashed by the accusation, at his father, he answered, "No one told me to say a word. I *did* think about it myself. Mother never knew that I was going to speak to you, but I couldn't help it. You may believe me; for I never tell lies."

The lad's unflinching attitude and earnest words softened the father, who, amid all the

impurity of his life and language, wished—ay, longed—to stand first in the love of this his darling child. “I’ll believe you, Harry, my boy,” returned Enfield. “But what made you say you couldn’t help speaking to me?”

“Oh, ever so many things. Sometimes,”—the lad blushed, and seemed half afraid to go on, but he *did*, after he caught sight of a look on his mother’s face that was more than words,—“sometimes, father, I hear the boys in school talk about you when you have been at the Wheatsheaf,”—this was an ingenious way of alluding to the times when his father had been seen in a state of intoxication,—“and they say that soon all the money will be gone, and, as you don’t work now, we shall be as poor as ever.”

A wrathful expression was growing on the father’s face, and a half-smothered oath burst from his lips and terrified the boy into silence. “The meddlesome young scoundrels! I wonder what they mean by talking about my concerns? They deserve such a thrashing as

—but I'll call on the master and see if he can't stop their tongues."

"Please don't, father! please don't!" pleaded the boy. "They didn't speak unkindly; they only said it was such a pity, for if father's money all went at the Wheatsheaf, may-be I should have to leave off school. And, oh, dear! I *am* miserable when people say such things about you!"

The boy broke down here. He loved his father, in spite of all the discomfort that his misconduct had brought into his home; and, laying his head on his father's shoulder, he wept bitterly.

"Hush, Harry, lad! hush! You mustn't cry. Why, I thought you were too much of a man! Come, come; this will never do. You shall not be taken from school: you shall have such a chance as I never had when I was a boy, if you'll only be a good lad. I'll work for you, never fear; and this money sha'n't be spent. It shall be put in the bank, or somewhere; and we'll have the interest of

it, as well as of that other money that your old uncle left for you children."

The boy could hardly believe his ears. He lifted his astonished, tearful face from his father's shoulder, and stood in silent surprise, while his mother—nay, we cannot picture *her* emotion.

"I'm in earnest, Harry; for all you and your mother stand looking as though you were struck all of a heap. I'll pay my debt to the landlord,—he's cheated me out of great part of it,—and we'll have a few more comfortable things into the house, and clothes, and such-like. But fifteen hundred dollars shall be put by; and the interest of it, with that of the other two thousand, will do us good. It's time I began to look at home; for, after all, when one thinks about it, I don't believe if I spent every halfpenny of it at the Wheatsheaf, yonder, and then we were all starving, that the landlord would give me a pint of beer, or you a bit of bread!"

Mary might have said that *she* had often

urged this plea, and that circumstances had repeatedly proved its justice; but she was contented to be silent, and to receive it as if an oracle had spoken, when her husband adopted the sentiment as his own. As she afterwards said to a friend,—

“I was frightened when the boy began to speak about the money; for, though I never told him to do it, I was sure the father would blame me. And he did; but I never spoke. I just prayed to God with all my heart that He would put words into the boy’s mouth and soften his father’s heart. And so He did. My prayer was heard; and I bless God for His great goodness, and give Him the honour due to His Name; for, without His help, how could that child have softened his father’s heart and turned him the right way?”

How, indeed? But God chooses not his instruments for their worldly strength or wisdom.

Young Harry’s tears were dried and his heart comforted by his father’s assurance; and straightway the man amused himself by set-

ting the lad to calculate how much interest the money would bring yearly, and again what that would give per week and per day. After this was done, he rose from his seat, saying,—

“Now, Harry, I shall just go and pay the landlord and other people what I owe them, and put the rest of the money in the bank.”

Mary's face blanched at this remark; “for,” thought she, “if he goes into the Wheatsheaf with all that money, he's as sure to be drawn in by his old mates as ever he was before.” Perhaps the child, too, guessed this,—for he had had bitter lessons in this kind of wisdom; and, rising also, he said,—

“May I go with you, father?”

“You may go with me to the bank, if you like,—I shall call there first; but you wouldn't like to call at the Wheatsheaf, should you, Harry? I must pay the landlord, you know.”

“There's no harm in that, father; but may I wait outside till you come?”

There was a struggle visible even in the man's face; and he was at a loss whether or no

to be angry at Harry's persistency. But again the mother's prayers were neither unheard nor unheeded, and the better thought conquered.

"Ay, Harry, you may go with me. I've made up my mind that your fine school-fellows sha'n't have a chance of making you ashamed to own your father: so come on. And, mother," he added, addressing his wife, who had but seldom, of late, heard so sweet a name applied to her by her husband,—“mother, if you'll put your new black gown and bonnet on, we'll go and do a bit of shopping. I think it will be just as well to spend the money on those things we want for the house and children, as to keep it.”

Mary thought so too; and well pleased was she to receive such an invitation. We may be sure she did not keep the two Harrys waiting, but was ready before they made their appearance, though they were not long absent, and the younger of the two whispered,—

“Father was hardly a minute in the Wheat-sheaf, though the landlord followed him to the

door and wanted him to stop; and he didn't look at all pleased when father said he'd promised to come home and go somewhere with you. He said he had thought father was not a man to be tied to a woman's apron-string; but he believed he was going to turn like Frank Johnson, who couldn't be parted from his wife for one evening that he might have a glass with a friend."

"And what did your father say to that, Harry?"

"Father *did* look cross; and he said, 'You're mistaken, Mr. Sykes. I'm not going to be like Frank Johnson. He is going the way to lose his bit of money,—or I'm no judge; but I'm going to try to keep mine.'"

"Thank God!" said Mary Enfield, fervently. "It may be that the legacy will prove a stroke of luck,—or, rather, a great blessing,—after all."

"And," said the lad, with a bright, glad countenance, "just after we left the landlord at his door, a man came up to father, and

said, 'You'll give us a glass, won't you, Harry?' It was the same man whose children father bought the shoes for."

"Sarah Dyson's husband, you mean?"

"Yes; but father shook his head. I had hold of his hand, and he seemed to give mine a tight squeeze." Mary thought to herself that probably the touch of that childish hand was a safeguard against the allurements of the landlord and the boon companion. "Then, when Mr. Dyson said, 'You'll be at the *Sheaf* to-night, Harry?' father said, 'I think not to-night, Dyson;' and we came home for you."

Probably Harry Enfield guessed what his son's whispered communications were about; but, at any rate, he did not interrupt them, for the sight of his boy's happy face warmed his own heart to a sense of the domestic pleasures which he had long despised, and indeed destroyed, by evil conduct. For the first time for many a day, the husband, wife and son went out together. The two girls, who came in from school at the very nick of time, were

left housekeepers, and told to have tea ready against the return of the shopping-party. It must be owned that *they* were hardly willing to be left behind, when they saw who were going. However, stay they did, and proved themselves trustworthy little personages, too. Truly they had their reward, when sundry parcels arrived from the different shops, and they were shown that, though absent from the shopping-party, their comforts and interests had been remembered.

One little incident which befell Harry Enfield and his wife on their way home must not be forgotten. They met Mr. and Mrs. Aldridge. The latter observed them before her husband did. "Why, I declare, John," she said, "wonders will never cease! There are Harry Enfield and his wife out together; and how happy Mary looks, and so neat in her tidy mourning! Let us stop and speak to them."

"I thought he was quite rude to you that Saturday night when I was from home," replied Mr. Aldridge.

"But the man was tipsy, and, besides that, almost wild about the news he had just received. I should like to speak to Mary. I have not seen her for some weeks past."

John Aldridge assented; and when they met the Enfields, his wife spoke in her most cheery tones to Mary, wished her all sorts of good, and remarked what a fine boy young Harry was growing; and such was the effect produced upon Harry, senior, by the sound of these cordial words, though they were not addressed to himself, that for once in his life he forced that stubborn tongue of his into something like an apology. "I'm afraid I rather forgot myself the last time I saw you, ma'am," he said; "but you must please excuse me. I had had some drink, and——"

"To be sure, Harry; and you were a bit excited by something else. We'll not say any more about *that* now; for I like to forget the unpleasant part of things, if I can. And when I look at you to-day I can hardly fancy it is the same man that came into the counting-

house when I was paying wages that Saturday night. I'm very glad to see you and Mary going out together, like my husband and me." And the little woman looked up at her tall, stout partner, as with a pleasant sense of protection, adding, "I should not like to be without Mr. Aldridge's company after business hours; and *we wives* are all alike in that respect."

Mrs. Aldridge, though one of the frankest of women, was extremely careful how she worded her speech on this occasion, and subsequently exulted in her successful diplomacy. She managed to please Harry Enfield, first by meeting his apology half-way, and next by the manner in which she linked Mary with herself by saying, "*We wives are all alike*,"—not to mention the allusion she incidentally made to the peculiar attractions of Harry's society to his own partner. Then, when she further praised the boy, and told Harry, junior, that she had heard of his industry at school, and hoped he would grow up a good and useful

man, the father's pride and gratification reached their height. At the same time, another sort of pride melted away before the genial words of the builder's wife; and Enfield said,—

“ You are always forgiving, Mrs. Aldridge; and I felt so vexed at myself, afterwards, for having behaved disrespectfully to you! However, may-be I shall make up for the past by being a better workman than I have been, if Mr. Aldridge likes to give me my old bench again.”

It would not be easy to say which of Enfield's hearers was most surprised; for even Mary, who had heard before of her husband's intention to go to work again, never thought he would bend so far as to return to his old master, after his boastful words, but supposed he would seek employment elsewhere.

Mr. Aldridge, too, was pleased, and at once answered, “ You can come back if you choose, Enfield; and I think you show your good sense in wishing to do it. You are worth as good wages as any man I know, when you are steady;

and you shall have them from me while you keep so."

"Then it's a bargain, Mr. Aldridge. You'll see me in the old shop on Monday morning next."

"Why not to-morrow, Enfield?" interposed Mrs. Aldridge, who always thought of what would benefit others, and strove to suggest it where she could not insist on its being put in practice. "To-morrow will only be Thursday; and you will earn half a week's wages between this and Saturday night. Mr. Aldridge is very busy at present, and will, I know, be glad of an extra hand."

Mary thanked the speaker with a grateful look; for she saw that Harry was just in the mood to be led, and she had so often been disappointed by seeing his good resolutions melt away before the first temptation, that she quite dreaded the interval between that and Monday. If spent in idleness, Harry was almost sure to be led into temptation. But Mrs. Aldridge carried the day. Enfield answered that he

didn't see as it would make any difference to him whether he began work the next morning or waited till Monday ; and, to be sure, if it would be any accommodation to Mr. Aldridge, he'd begin the next day, with the greatest pleasure.

Thus it was settled, and the parties separated in high good humour. Mr. Aldridge was especially pleased ; for he had calculated that Harry Enfield would be too proud to work, and that he should have another opponent in business. "And though, my dear," said he to his wife, "it would not be long before I drove such opposition as his off my path, still it costs money to do it, and it is a great deal better to have Harry back at work and serving me with his ready hands. That was a good hit of yours about his coming to-morrow. I should have said, 'Come on Monday, Enfield ;' but it is a good thing to have a sharp little wife beside one, sometimes."

"You see, I considered that in the next three days he might go off drinking again, if he had nothing to do. And, apart from the interest I

felt in Harry's continuing steady on your account, I really thought I could do any thing to keep him right, for Mary's own sake. How happy the poor woman looked to-night!"

"Yes: Harry has had an excellent wife, whom he has treated cruelly; and yet, I'll answer for it, the woman will forgive and forget all that is past, if he will only alter now. But I doubt his persevering in the right way."

"We must encourage him all we can, John. I will; for, having a good husband myself, I know and am thankful for my domestic happiness, and would do all I could to secure the same for another woman, let her station in life be what it might."

Leaving Mr. and Mrs. Aldridge to take their way home, we will for a moment follow Harry Enfield and Mary.

"I dare say you didn't think I should go to my old place again, Mary: did you?"

"No, John: that I didn't."

"And I don't know that I should, either,—though I wanted to go back,—only we just

dropped on him and his wife so nicely, and it was done I hardly know how."

"Mrs. Aldridge has such a sweet, pleasant way with her! She does as much good with her tongue as many women do harm with theirs."

"That's true enough. But there's something else that made me hang to Mr. Aldridge. He means to upset Frank Johnson; and he'll do it. I can't abide that fellow, with his smooth words. I've not forgot how I was ordered out of Sunny Lee, and all through him,—turned out like a bad fellow."

Mary was sorry to observe her husband's rising wrath, and to mark that the old bitter spirit was not a whit subdued. She was afraid to speak. She could not agree with her husband's dislike to Frank, and she dared not condemn it: therefore she remained silent.

As to Harry, he did not seem to expect an answer, but, after a brief pause, continued, "Yes! Frank Johnson caused me to be turned out of that purse-proud old manufacturer's

house; and I dare say he is pleasing himself with the notion that I shall spend all our money, and that our young uns will be in rags again directly; but I'll let him see whether, with all his fine sense and pretending to be so good, he'll do more for his boys than I'll do for mine, or get to be a richer man, either. I shall live to see *him* poor enough, I believe; and if I could but know that old Philips had taken against him, I should be happy."

Fortunately, young Harry did not hear his father's vindictive words. They were not very far from home when Enfield began to speak about Frank Johnson; and the boy had just run forward to apprise the girls that their parents were coming, and to fill them with delightful anticipations with regard to the purchases made during this extraordinary shopping excursion. After their arrival, both parents and children found abundant employment, first round the tea-table, and afterwards in criticizing the various new articles of dress, &c. No wonder the evening passed quickly,

and that Harry found that it was bedtime before he began to miss the Wheatsheaf and its company.

Mrs. Enfield rejoiced at this unexpected change for the better in her husband. Yet she rejoiced with trembling,—because his very motives in thus changing his habits arose from a spirit of envy and hatred against his unoffending neighbour. “If he did but change because he was sensible of the sinfulness of being a drunkard, a swearer, a waster of strength, time and opportunities, I should have tenfold cause to be glad. If I could hope that the Spirit of God has convinced him of sin and led him to trust in Christ for grace and strength to overcome his evil habits, I should rejoice with great joy. But I doubt—I doubt that, if it hadn't been for his wanting to surpass Frank Johnson, not all the knowledge of right that he really has, or love for the boy and the rest of us, would have moved him a single step from the wrong road. But still I must be thankful for this measure of good. I must

pray for him; and perhaps, by-and-by, his heart may be softened. The practice of what is right may lead him to love it for its own sake."

And the blessed words of encouragement which had cheered and comforted Mary on darker days than this, came into her mind to cheer and comfort her again:—"For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?"

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE AND A NEW UNDER-
TAKING.

SHORT time before the events narrated in the last chapter, a new-comer settled in Millfield. He was a master-bricklayer, named Bateman, and more than once he and Frank Johnson had had business transactions together. Indeed, Mr. Bateman had acted (so thought Frank) in an unusually liberal spirit towards him, and one which showed in still stronger contrast the opposite course pursued by his former employer. When the bricklayer entered into a contract for the erection of a building, he made a point of offering the joiners'-work to Frank, and on at least fair terms. This did much towards reviving

our old friend's drooping spirits and making him labour with renewed energy. Moreover, it was rather a pleasant surprise for him to find that his former tormentor, Harry Enfield, had decided on returning to work for Mr. Aldridge.

"I fully reckoned on having more opposition from Enfield," he told his wife; "but I find this will not be the case. I am glad that he is taking a turn the right way, and that his money is likely to be a comfort, instead of a curse, to his wife and family. May God bless and prosper him, and give him strength to persevere! Perhaps, some day, you and Mary Enfield and your two husbands may be good friends and neighbours again."

Mrs. Johnson heartily echoed the wish, and thought it quite possible, knowing, as she did, that her husband's forgiving disposition and Christian feeling would prevent his recalling past grievances or allowing them to interfere for the hindrance of future friendly intercourse.

We, who have seen what were Harry Enfield's feelings towards Frank Johnson, know how little chance there is of such intercourse being established yet a while.

The conversation between Frank and his wife was interrupted by the entrance of Bateman, or, rather, by his rap at the door. It was evening, when Frank was sure to be found by his own fireside; and Mr. Bateman's inquiry for his fellow-tradesman was answered by an invitation to come in.

"I thought I should find you here, Johnson," was the first remark of the new-comer; "and very glad I am that you are here, for I want to talk to you about a bit of business. Here is a chance for both of us to make a little fortune, if you like to join me in trying for it."

"That's a good hearing," replied Frank, cheerfully; "for, to tell you the truth, I have had enough to do, lately, to keep what I have, without any chance of adding to it."

"Ah, well, you can look at some papers

I've brought, and then see what you think about it."

Bateman pulled out plans and specifications, and the two men laid their heads together to consider them. For a couple of hours they talked and calculated; and then Frank said, "I think I thoroughly understand this affair. There is a possibility—nay, a likelihood—of making a very large profit, if we have a fair amount of success; but there is also the certainty of a great risk if we do undertake it. And I'm not fond of deep speculation. It is so much like gambling that I think it isn't right."

"Come, now; that's too bad," returned Bateman. "Mrs. Johnson, just listen to me, —for I know your good man *talks business* to you. Here is a piece of work to be done, in which many a thousand of bricks and feet of timber will have to be used. Moreover, it *is* a right and a necessary work, and one that must be done by somebody. Business men have declared that it is practicable. I

have given my best powers to considering it; and I see nothing to prevent it. Only, there are difficulties and obstacles of no every-day nature to overcome. But then, again, to make up for these difficulties, the margin of profit will be great in proportion. In fact, it will be something enormous; and it only wants clear heads and strong hands to manage so as to win this profit. Now, I think your steady, persevering husband is just the man to grapple with difficulties and to overcome them. That done, he will have to hold out both his hands to grasp his gains. Now, he and I are not very old acquaintances, but still we have done a few bits of work together, and he knows something about my way of transacting business."

Here Bateman paused and looked at Frank, who nodded assent and added, "I am bound to say, Mr. Bateman, that in your dealings with me you have shown a fair and liberal spirit."

"I knew you would acknowledge that. And

now, though we are not old acquaintances, don't you think if I were a man that was inclined to act deceitfully and shabbily, or in the habit of doing it, you would have found it out before now? I believe that a fellow's natural disposition is as sure to peep out at a single business transaction as to be found out after a long acquaintance with his mode of action."

"There is some truth in that," owned Frank.

"Well, then, about this affair. I don't want to shift my responsibility on to another person's shoulders, or to ask him to take all the risk and to leave me the certainty of all the profits. I simply want a partner. The work is one that must be executed partly by a person in my way of business, partly by a worker in wood. I am resolved on sending in estimates for it; and as Mr. Johnson and I have agreed well and been mutually satisfied so far, I come to him and say, 'Will you join me again?'"

"I'm very much obliged to you for the offer, at any rate."

"And you're very welcome. As I said before, I don't ask you to take a risk in which I have no share: so, now, what say you?"

Frank paused and pondered, then answered, "I can't decide to-night. It is not like an ordinary job: so it requires rather more consideration than I usually have to give these things. You must leave the plans and calculations with me until to-morrow. I must 'sleep upon it,' as the saying is, before I give a positive answer."

"To be sure: nothing can be fairer. Think it over, and to-morrow evening I'll drop in again, and we'll settle it one way or another. Now I must be off. It is getting late, and you and I are both early risers. We have to be up with the lark, if we mean to feather our nests. We are not like *some* master-tradesmen, who have made their fortune and can afford to lie in bed. You know the old rhyme, Mrs. Johnson,—

'He that would thrive must rise by five;
He that has thriven may lie till seven.'

We must not lie till seven till we have done this job I've been talking to your husband about. *Then we shall* have a chance; for I fancy we shall be numbered among those '*that have thriven.*' I wish you both a good night." And almost with the sound of his voice, the echo of Mr. Bateman's footsteps began to die away in the distance, so rapid were his movements.

"Of course you want to know what all our talk has been about," said Frank, when his wife returned to the fireside.

"Yes; I should like to know, if you think it is any thing I can understand. I wouldn't ask while Mr. Bateman and you were talking; though I felt rather curious."

"And I always wish you to know. So, now, listen. These plans are for a new sluice. There will be a great deal of brickwork; and there will be flood-gates, and other matters in wood, that would fall to my share if I took

it to do in company with Bateman. And both of us would act under a gentleman who is a civil engineer and architect and who has planned the work. If the affair were successfully completed, it would be an immensely profitable one."

"And what *might* hinder success, Frank?"

"Wind and water, my dear. Very, very heavy rains might cause a flood, and if the wind helped the water there is a possibility of the works being destroyed before completion. To make amends for this, though, as Bateman said, a very extraordinary margin of probable profit would be allowed."

Frank further explained the nature of the work, the difficulties to be overcome, and all the etceteras with which Bateman had made him acquainted. It was late before the husband and wife laid their heads on their pillows; and even then Frank did not "*sleep upon it.*" His mind was too much occupied in calculating the chances which Bateman's proposal offered, and in trying to decide whether he

should be justified in accepting it. But morning came and found him still calculating and still undecided.

With night arrived Mr. Bateman; and then an answer must be given.

"Now, Johnson, what have you made up your mind to do?" asked the bricklayer. "I hope you've concluded to throw in your chance with mine once more."

"I hardly know what to say, Mr. Bateman; but I'll tell you what makes me hesitate. Rather more than half the capital with which I trade belongs to Mr. Philips. He lent me double that, or I never should have started for myself. At first I did well, and paid him back half; but latterly I have had opposition to fight against, and barely cleared my expenses."

"Ah! I know something about that. There has been mean, ungenerous work, not pleasant to think or talk of. Yet never fear: truth and honesty will conquer at last; and mind if this very job we have been talking about doesn't clear you."

"It seems a promising affair, and there is only one chance against it; but still there is a risk, and I must not run the hazard of losing Mr. Philips's money in any thing like a speculation."

"Pay him off, then, and risk only your own."

Frank Johnson laughed outright. "That is much more easily said than done, Mr. Bateman."

"Sell off a portion of your stock, and trade only with your own money. Or borrow what you owe him of another person, and give a bill of sale as security. I was in a lawyer's office to-day, and I heard him say he wanted to put a few hundreds out at interest, which are lying idle at the bank, but nobody seemed to be in want of money."

Frank hesitated, pondered, and knew not what to say. There was a brilliant prospect of profit, which he did not like to relinquish, — a chance of ruin, which he dreaded to encounter. But, as Mr. Bateman was all in

favour of the scheme, and there was no person present to speak against it, Frank soon began to see only the bright side, and he finally consented not only to join the other in estimating for the work, but also to pay Mr. Philips by the means proposed. Frank had fancied that he looked and spoke coldly now; but, whether he was right or not in this idea, certain it is that he felt most anxious to cancel the debt he owed him.

A very short time sufficed to settle Frank's doubts as to whether his and Bateman's joint estimates would be accepted or not. Sundry misgivings as to the wisdom of the step he had taken were half allayed by the idea that most likely Mr. Aldridge would be a competitor, and a successful one. But Mr. Aldridge did not send in estimates, and Frank and Bateman took the work to do.

Frank found no difficulty in borrowing the money he wanted, on the terms named by Bateman; and he accordingly paid Mr. Philips, and became indebted for a somewhat larger

sum to a person unknown, who acted through his lawyer.

Mr. Philips took the money, and returned Frank his written acknowledgment, without any comment. But, when the business was concluded, he said, "I always thought you a thoroughly straightforward man, Johnson, until this moment."

Perhaps Frank was never so near forgetting himself as when he heard these words. The blood mounted to his forehead, and he said, almost angrily, "I think, sir, it isn't right to tell me *that*, when I have paid you every farthing of the money that you were kind enough to put in my hands, now near four years ago."

"It isn't the money, Johnson. I own your honesty; but you might have trusted me. I think I have always shown a disposition to befriend you. Mind, I don't say this with a view to cause an unpleasant sense of obligation, but as a simple statement of facts; and yet I have reason to know that you are not paying me out of your business profits, but that you

have borrowed money at a higher rate of interest, because, I suppose, you were tired of me as a creditor. Moreover, you have placed your very home and its comforts in jeopardy, in order to engage in what is at best a speculation, with a man of whom you know very little. Why did you not come to me, lay your affairs before me, and ask the advice of a man who is older than yourself, and who has put thousands in circulation where you have stirred pounds? I have felt hurt at your being so reserved of late, Frank Johnson, and I dare say you have noticed it; but, of course, after my conduct towards you, even you could not attribute my distant manner to our little money transaction."

Frank would have spoken, for the scales were falling from his eyes, but he felt afraid to tell Mr. Philips that he really had attributed his reserved manner to dissatisfaction because he himself had not answered his patron's expectations in making money rapidly enough.

"You have chosen your own path, Johnson," continued Mr. Philips, waving his hand, as a sign that he wished not to be interrupted; "and I can only say that I am very sorry for you. Had you come to me, as to a friend who had ever encouraged your confidence, you would have found me ready as ever to help you, both with advice and aid of a more substantial kind. I wish you may not have cause to regret the position in which you have placed yourself, and the speculation (I can but call it so) in which you are involved. The struggling workman has my sympathy; with the rash speculator I have nothing in common."

A quiet but stern "good-day" from Mr. Philips ended the conference; for Frank lacked courage to speak. He only bowed, and stammered out, "Good-day, sir, and thank you for past favours. I may have done wrong, but I *am* grateful for all your kindness."

"He was so stern," said poor Frank, afterwards, to his wife, "that for my life I couldn't tell him what was on my mind. So he'll not

know that it was because he was my first and best friend, that I couldn't bear to speculate, as he says, with a halfpenny of his money. And, after all, I haven't understood him quite, I find; though I read his character in some things. Still, I think a gentleman like Mr. Philips might have considered that a working-man like me would be afraid of presuming too much on the notice he had taken of me. How could I know that he would wish me to go and talk to him about my little business troubles?"

Mrs. Johnson sighed, for she saw that Frank was more than doubtful of the wisdom of the step he had taken. But it was too late now to draw back; and she would not discourage him with doleful forebodings. On the contrary, she used all the innocent arts of a loving wife to induce him at least to set out on his new undertaking with a good heart. But Frank could not sleep *that* night. Mr. Philips's words, "You have placed your very home and its comforts in jeopardy," seemed ever ringing in his ears, and, all through the still hours of

darkness, Frank's sorrowful imagination conjured up pictures widely different from the bright scenes he hoped to realize in that dear home when he first began business. It was of no use to repent now. With the morning came Mr. Bateman, full of business projects; and Frank felt that he had no time for thought: he must at once begin to act. Yet his heart sank as he considered what he had pledged himself to; and he remarked to his fellow-contractor, "I doubt much whether I ought to have entered into an engagement of such magnitude, with my limited means."

"Oh, you have what is even better than capital," was the quick rejoinder.

"And what is that?" inquired Frank.

"Credit, my friend,—credit. You have a good name; that is to say, a name which is accounted good on the back of a bill,—or on either side, for that matter. And, you see," he added, in a tone which he intended to be jocular, "we have the very best authority—Scripture authority—for making this asser-

tion; for didn't the wisest man the world ever saw say, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches'? eh, Mr. Johnson?"

The speaker gave Frank a playful dig with his elbow as he quoted thus irreverently and unseasonably the words of Holy Writ; but, somehow, Frank did not appear to appreciate the intended jest; and his wife, who overheard it, told him afterwards that Bateman's manner had filled her with mistrust.

It was not a pleasant beginning, nor one calculated to remove his rising misgivings.

A few words which passed between Mr. Aldridge and Harry Enfield will perhaps serve to show that Frank had more reason for his forebodings than he was himself aware of. Enfield was working pretty steadily in his old place, occasionally indulging his liking for drink, but steering clear of the excesses that used to render his home miserable, and always earning large wages.

He had just received orders respecting some doors which he was making, and which were

wanted on the next day: so, to accomplish the job, he had agreed to work over-time. Mr. Aldridge was turning to leave the shop, when he said, "By-the-by, Enfield, you told me Mr. Bryant had invested your bit of money for you. I hope you have good security?"

"Pretty fair, sir, I think,—thank you."

Mr. Aldridge thought that Enfield would tell him all about it; but, as Harry did not seem inclined to be communicative, his employer said, "Is it in the hands of a Millfield person, may I ask?"

"Well, yes, sir, it is. I don't mind letting you know who has it, if you will say nothing about it. At present only Mr. Bryant, the lawyer, knows, besides myself. Mary is as ignorant as a child. She is so well contented with me now that she never troubles her head about money matters."

"And you must still let her have cause to be, Harry; for Mary has been a good wife. She took you for better for worse, and——"

"She has had her share of worse, you think,

Mr. Aldridge; and so do I. Very likely you'll hear me talked about as a model husband yet, instead of a drunken blackguard." The man laughed carelessly enough; for even when moved by his better feelings he was too proud to let them be seen, or to show his true sentiments. "As to the money, Mr. Aldridge, you'll be a little astonished to hear that I've invested it in Frank Johnson's business."

"Then you are a silly fellow for your pains. You will lose it, and deserve to do so."

"Well, I don't know that, sir. Frank will go to the dogs; and may-be you and I will both take credit to ourselves for having helped him on the way:—you, by business opposition; I, by *lending him money!*"

"Again I tell you, you are a foolish fellow, Enfield. I know you don't like Johnson. You've never got over that old grudge. But, if you think to ruin him by furnishing him with means to carry on his present work, you may accomplish your end, but you will be to some extent involved in his downfall. Don't

you know that he risks *all* he has, and all you have lent him, by entering into this contract? I would have nothing to do with it, though strongly solicited to estimate. I can afford to venture a few hundreds, and the risk to me would be comparatively small; but it is a mad undertaking for Frank. One night might see him beggared."

"He has given a bill of sale, Mr. Aldridge; and at this moment I have power over every stick he *calls* his own. Mr. Bryant thinks I am safe, at any rate."

There was a glitter in Harry Enfield's eye, that told with what satisfaction he contemplated his present position.

"I understand; I understand," said Mr. Aldridge, shaking his head reprovably. "It will be well if, in your desire to pay off old scores, you don't get taken in yourself."

"Of course, sir, I trust to you to keep my secret. I do not wish Johnson to recognize me as his creditor, at present."


"You may rely upon that; but, mind, I

don't think you show a good spirit towards Frank."

Mr. Aldridge left the workshop, and Enfield threw down his plane for a moment to indulge in a hearty laugh. "I like that remark of our boss," murmured he. "If that isn't '*the pot calling the kettle black*,' I wonder what is! Here *he* goes and takes work on terms that can't pay him, on purpose to hinder Johnson from getting a living beside him; and yet Frank worked for him for years as well as any man in his place. And then he goes and puts on a grave face, and shakes his head, and says *I* don't show a good spirit to Frank! Now, he may profit by what I have done; he can't profit by Mr. Aldridge's dealings. If people could but see how ridiculous they make themselves when they begin to preach one thing to a person who knows they act just in an opposite way themselves! Practice before precept, say I, Mr. Aldridge." And, with this aphorism on his lips, Enfield resumed his plane and his labours.

CHAPTER IX.

FIRST HOPES, AND A FIRST MISFORTUNE.

N spite of all gloomy prophecies, the work which Frank and his partner had undertaken progressed favourably. Indeed, it was rapidly approaching completion, and the two contractors were in high spirits. They had received half the sum to which they would be entitled when it was quite finished; bills had been punctually met, wages regularly paid, and Frank's day-dreams had become bright and pleasant again. Mr. Aldridge began to doubt whether, after all, he had acted wisely in refusing to give an estimate, and Enfield to believe that Johnson's worldly goods would be beyond his power to grasp.

As to Bateman, he was exultant in the extreme. "Now, Frank, my boy," he observed, as he clapped his companion on the shoulder, "you won't pull a long face and hesitate so, when I come to propose a good thing to you again, will you? You'll have a little faith in my power to see as far through a millstone as my neighbours. You'll be wishing there was a chance of a few more jobs of the same sort in prospect." This remark was made when the contractors were fingering the first moiety of the cash for the work.

Frank looked pleasant enough as he pocketed his share, but said, "You're fond of proverbs, Bateman: so I'll just remind you of one."

"I can guess; I can guess. You are going to tell me 'not to halloo before I'm out of the wood.' I must confess we are not out of the wood yet; but we're marching fast, and shall see our way clear very soon. Till then, I shall not say another word."

Another week's work was added to that previously done, and cautious Frank had almost

lost his sense of uneasiness. It was hardly likely that in August there would be weather to cause a flood and injure the newly-constructed sluice. The scene of the work was more than two miles from Millfield; and sometimes both Frank and Bateman remained on the spot for two or three days together, unless urgent business called them home. On Saturday nights, however, they always returned early to Millfield.

It was on a Saturday evening that the two contractors stood surveying the progress made. "One more week, and all will be safe," said Frank.

"Ay, to a certainty. If we had chosen the weather, we couldn't have been better suited."

"But it's very close to-night," said Frank, whose attention was called to the weather by his companion's observation. "In the middle of the day the heat was hardly bearable, and I felt glad I had not to walk home then; but I believe it is hotter now."

"It is more sultry. There isn't a breath of air stirring. We shall have a thunder-storm, or it will be very odd."

The sky was assuming that leaden yet lurid hue which is a sign of the coming storm, and the birds flew to and fro in ominous fashion.

"Come, Johnson; let us be starting. We shall have enough to do to reach home before the rain begins," said Bateman.

Frank heard without heeding. He stood gazing at the work in which his all was invested, as though a species of fascination held him to the spot.

His companion lost patience. "Go I must: so, if you don't mean to start, good-night to you."

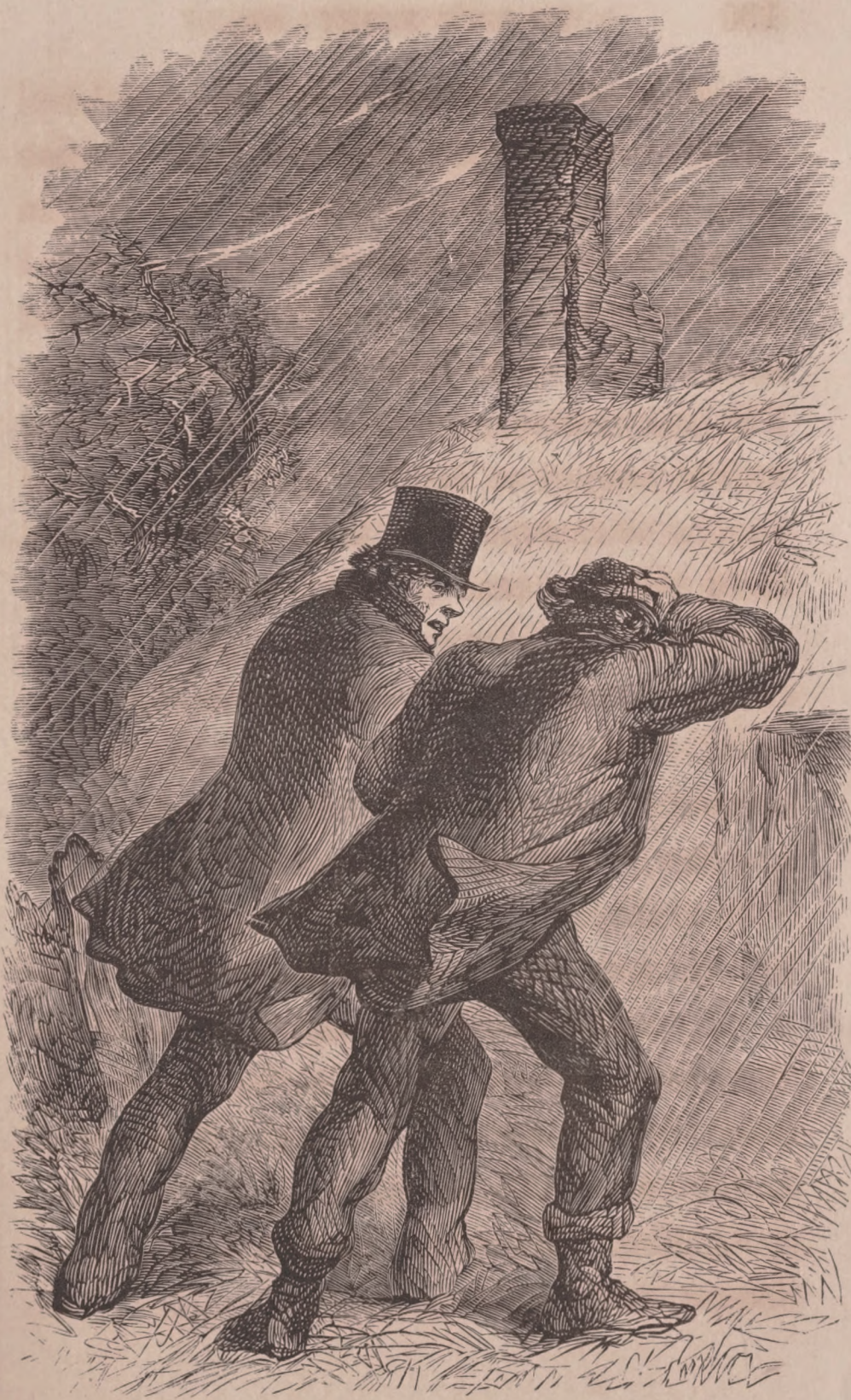
This roused Frank from his reverie, and the two walked from the place together. They were not half-way home when a few large drops made them look round to see if any shelter could be obtained. There were large trees enough; but a vivid flash of lightning showed them that these would afford no safe

covering, and they hurried on to reach a hovel which stood in an adjoining field. Before they were beneath its roof, the rain fell in torrents; flash after flash of lightning dazzled their eyes, peal after peal of thunder sounded in their ears. The trees, of which every leaf had been motionless an hour before, were now rudely swayed to and fro by the wind, and boughs were rent from them as easily as a child snaps a tender green twig from the sprouting hawthorn.

Once Frank's main thought would have been, "How uneasy Lizzy will be on my account!" *Now* he could only ask himself the question, "Will the work stand?"

Bateman, too, was evidently anxious. Usually a man of many words, he now stood silently and gloomily watching the strife of the elements, and especially the torrents of rain. "Did you ever see such a rain, Frank?" he said, after a long silence.

"I think I never did. It falls rather like a sheet of water than in drops."



"They hurried on to reach a hovel in an adjoining field."

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“And how it will pour down the hill-sides, and rush and roar, *you know where!*”

Frank did indeed know. There was no need to repeat their forebodings to each other. These men were well aware that the mind of each was at that moment a reflection of the other's.

The rain did not cease soon, but lasted for hours. There had been weeks of dry weather, and now it appeared as though the clouds had gathered all their strength to form one great torrent. It was late before the men could leave their humble shelter and seek the homeward path. When they did leave it, they hesitated whether to turn towards Millfield, or to retrace their steps to Hebworth Lock, the scene of their recent labours.

“Which way is it to be, Johnson?”

“If I had no wife at home, I should say to Hebworth; but she will be so uneasy——”

“And if any thing has gone wrong, we can hope to do nothing to-night; but, then, there is the suspense.”

"Well, if any thing *has* happened to the work, we shall have a hopeful season until we are *sure* of the worst."

"But if *you* can help feeling anxious, it is more than I can; and we may anticipate evil without occasion."

"I cannot help being anxious," was Frank's quiet answer; "but I must bear my own suspense about the sluice, to relieve my wife's uneasiness respecting me."

Suiting the action to the word, Frank turned his back upon the road to Hebworth, and walked rapidly towards his home. His companion hesitated a moment, and then followed him. But so absorbed were both the men in anxious thoughts, that they did not exchange another word until they bade each other good-night when the moment came for them to separate.

As Frank neared his home, he saw his wife on the door-step. "Oh, Frank," said she, "I am glad you are here safe. I thought you would be on the road when the storm came on."

"So I was, and Bateman too; but we took shelter in a little hovel that was near, so we suffered no great inconvenience, except that we had to stay there for a long time, watching the lightning and rain, and listening to the thunder."

"Rain! Yes, indeed: I never saw such a rain. The water ran down the streets here like a little river, and some low-lying houses have the ground-floors flooded. I heard a man say, as he passed by, that all the poor women in Slater's Buildings have their Saturday's work to do over again, and that there was nothing to be seen and heard but the wringing of mops and clatter of pails. However, it is a mercy that no very serious harm is done. All can be repaired and made comfortable by a few hours' work."

His wife went on talking thus as she busied herself in getting her husband's tea ready; but Frank made no answer, and when she turned to look at him she saw by his face that his thoughts were far away. So she

completed her preparations in silence, and, when all was ready, touched his shoulder to call his attention to the meal.

Frank drew his chair to the table, and was then fain to notice his little three-year-old girl, who had been much dissatisfied at receiving no petting from *him*. Frank was always loving and gentle to his children, and his presence was ever an encouragement to smiles and words of kindness. So now, to make amends for not having kissed little Jenny when he came in, he did it half a dozen times over, and pressed his lips to each little fat round cheek, then to the forehead and eyes.

"But how is it father's little girl is not in bed yet?"

"The storm was so terrible, Frank," said Mrs. Johnson, "that I hardly liked to get the children to bed while it lasted. Poor little Jenny was frightened when she saw the lightning, and clung to me. She is too little to understand who it is that 'sendeth forth

lightnings with the rain, bringing the winds out of His treasures.' And really, Frank, the storm has been awful to look upon, even to us, who *can* understand at whose command the thunder is heard and the rain falls."

"So I suppose you gathered your children round you and waited till the storm was over."

"Yes, I had my children round me," she said.

But, even while her presence made the young creatures feel safe, the mother was uplifting her heart to God to preserve their father from the violence of the storm.

Weary and anxious as Frank Johnson felt when he crossed his threshold, he was in some measure beguiled into cheerfulness by the thoughtful kindnesses of his wife and the evident delight with which the juvenile members of the family hailed his coming home. Nay, for a little time he almost forgot that the storm just past might be in one sense the turning-point of his fortunes.

Frank Johnson did not pay his men on Saturday nights. As a working-man he had felt how much more advantageous it would be to himself, and convenient for his wife, if, instead of waiting for his wages until six or seven o'clock at night, he could have them a day sooner. And when he commenced business for himself, she had suggested that he should pay his men on the Thursday evening.

"'Twill make no difference, Frank," she urged, "if you give the men their earnings for the week before."

"But why Thursday?"

"Because, you know, our best market is on Friday; and if the men had their wages always on Thursday night they could go to market, or, rather, their wives could, and buy at first hand. Instead of that, if they wait till Saturday they must purchase of the hucksters, who have themselves bought in the Friday's market. Then their butter will cost them more, to say nothing of other things. And then, you know, Frank, there is always

extra household work to do on Saturday; and it is much more convenient for a woman to be able to stay in-doors, instead of leaving off to do her marketing. Perhaps she has to do it late on Saturday evening, and to leave her children in bed, or, at any rate, alone in the house. It has made my heart ache, sometimes, to see tired women, with little babies in their arms, going to market, when they ought to be going to bed."

This was the wife's plea when her husband first became a master-workman; and it was not urged in vain. Frank's men had their wages on Thursday evening, and found their own and their wives' domestic comforts greatly increased thereby.

Of course, in consequence of this arrangement, Frank did not expect to see any of his men on that Saturday evening after the storm; and, having given orders for the coming week, he was surprised when his wife came and told him that George Baker wished to speak to him. An uneasy sensation came over

Frank; for George Baker had been working at Hebworth Lock that afternoon, and his employer well remembered that the man said he should not return to Millfield till late, as he was going to take tea with an old neighbour who now lived at Hebworth.

Frank rose from his seat, went to the door, and closed it behind him. "Well, George, what news have you brought me from Hebworth? How have the works stood?"

"Why, sir, you know what a rain it was here."

"I was only half-way home; but I can guess, George."

"As well as I can judge, sir, it was nothing here to what we had it at Hebworth. It was just as though the water came down in a piece; and the sound of the flood rushing down, *you know where, sir*, was like thunder."

"But the sluice, the new works, George, —how have they stood? I can tell that you have some bad news, and you don't like to say it; but it is worse to expect it than even

to know. Out with it, man, in as few words as you can."

Thus exhorted, George said, "Well, the new works are clean swept away; and I never was so sorry to tell any thing in all my life."

Frank had anticipated bad news, but not such intelligence as this; and no wonder that the shock was great. He reeled back against the door as though he had received a blow, and was utterly incapable of speaking for some moments. Poor George Baker, as stalwart a fellow as you could meet in a long day's march, had a heart as tender as a woman's; and he almost felt as though it were his doings, when he saw the effect of the news on his employer. "I almost wish," he began, "that I'd never come to tell you; but I thought you ought to know; but I am as sorry as though it had happened to myself. I doubt it'll be a great loss to you."

"It will,—it will indeed, George. But it was quite right in you to let me know. You're a good fellow, and have always done your

best for my benefit, and I know that you're sorry to bring me bad news," was Frank's reply.

"I am that, sir. Is there aught I can do for you now?"

"Nothing, thank you, George. We might have tried to mend a *little* damage; but as it is——"

Frank stopped again, and the man returned, "Of course, sir: I know what you mean. I wish I could do any thing to set things right. But I couldn't help feeling in my own mind to-night, when I looked at the place I was working at a few hours since, that when God chooses to put out *His* strength, what poor, helpless good-for-nothings us chaps are, though we think we can do something at other times."


"True, George. I feel that, I assure you. It's a heavy blow to me; but I must try to submit, and endeavour to make amends somehow."

Frank went in to his house again with a saddened heart; for had he not to break the

news to his good wife? The sight of his children was become a tacit reproach, instead of a comfort. For, again, had he not placed that home in jeopardy, and were not the very beds on which they were sleeping pledged as a security for the borrowed money?

CHAPTER X.

A COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS.—AUNTY'S
BASKET ARRIVES.

 FRANK JOHNSON communicated the bad news, first to his wife, and then to Bateman. The former, though deeply grieved, bore it like a Christian woman, and strove to support her husband, whose bitter self-reproach was worse than even the trouble itself. As to Bateman, he was like most sanguine persons, —unreasonably buoyed up at one time, and as unreasonably cast down when trouble came. Frank found he had to provide energy both for his partner and himself.

However, the men were bound by the contract they had accepted. The hope of large profits, which had tempted them to undertake

it, had proved to be a vain one; but, though there was no chance of avoiding a heavy loss, the work must be recommenced, and completed, too, before they were freed from the bond they had entered into. "It was not *utter* ruin yet," said Frank, and made another start.

But there were new disadvantages to contend against. A brief season of mild weather allowed the men to push on their operations; though nothing could make them feel cheerful, bearing about with them, as they did, the knowledge that, so far from there being a chance of any thing to repay their labour, it was spent for nothing,—ay, worse than nothing. Towards the end of September came more heavy rains and high winds. First, the progress of the works was retarded; then they received considerable injury, again, through a heavy gale. Then money became very scarce. Frank's whole available capital was sunk in this one undertaking, and he soon discovered that Bateman's means were even

more limited than his own. One day the latter came to Frank and asked him to endorse a note for one hundred dollars.

Frank demurred a little. "I don't see how I can do it," he said. "It will fall due just before New Year's day; and I know I shall have no means of meeting it if you should fail in doing so."

"But I shall not fail, Mr. Johnson; for I have money to come in at that time from other sources, though I have none now. And it just comes to this:—I must either raise this sum, or I may shut up shop."

More conversation passed. Bateman used plausible arguments, and the end of it was that Frank endorsed the note.

He rued this before a week had passed. "I'm afraid," he said to Mrs. Johnson, "that Bateman is not quite straightforward."

"What makes you think so? You know he cannot be blamed for the misfortunes that have happened to the works."

"No; but I've found out that he would

never have asked me to join in the work at all, if he could have persuaded Mr. Aldridge to do it. He wanted a man with more money than I had; and he only came to me after he had vainly tried Mr. Aldridge."

"Are you quite sure of this, Frank?"

"Dick Halliday told me, and he had it from Mr. Aldridge himself. Dick is very sorry for me, I can see; but I can see also that he thinks I have acted very foolishly in having any thing to do with the matter. I might have known if Mr. Aldridge drew back that there was no good to be done; for, though he is so quiet, he is a keen man of business, and likes to make money."

"You couldn't know that he had declined, though." She waited a moment, and then said, "Have you got money to pay the half-year's interest of the borrowed sum?"

"Yes: I have taken care of that."

This was a relief to the good woman; for the thought of the interest, due three days hence, had weighed heavily upon her, and she

had seen sad visions of a desolated home and hungry children, which *might* become real. They were now more likely to prove true than the bright pictures that Frank used to draw.

But things were not yet at the worst. Money became scarcer still; for no more could be had on account of the works at Hebworth Lock until they were entirely completed, and the second disaster which occurred there reduced Frank almost to despair. It was not so serious as the former one; but still it was sufficiently so to entail another considerable addition to the too great outlay already made. Mrs. Johnson did what she could to cheer her husband, but at the same time she had to contend against her own sad forebodings; and her attempts were not very successful. As to Mr. Bateman, he lost all courage, and said it was almost useless to struggle against such ill-luck as they had experienced.

It wanted only a few days to the New Year, the time at which he had said he should

“have money from various sources,” when Bateman disappeared from Millfield altogether. His flight was managed so dexterously—his wife and children had gone before him, under pretence of paying a visit to her mother—that pursuit was vain. Then poor Frank saw the very last fragment of his bubble fortune disappear; and he found out that his late fellow-contractor was not only deficient in moral courage, but in principle also. Bateman was deeply in debt; and he had taken care to leave nothing behind him to satisfy his creditors even in part. Frank Johnson discovered that he was actually unable to meet his engagements when he came to Millfield, and that he had made a market of Frank's good name in order to obtain credit.

This new blow almost prostrated both Frank and his wife. Her health had suffered much through the constant pressure of mental anxiety, and she was now in an unusually delicate state. It grieved Frank to see how incessantly she laboured; and yet he could

not but love and honour his good wife all the more for her patience and the uncomplaining manner in which she endured new privations and strove to lighten his cares.

There was one thing which Frank did not at first remember when he heard of Bateman's flight; and that was the bill for one hundred dollars which he had been induced to endorse. He turned pale at the very thought of it, and he mentioned his dread to his wife.

"Surely, Frank, he will have paid in money at the bank to meet that. He could not be so cruel as to leave this additional burden for you."

"I must ascertain whether he has or not; but I hardly dare hope that he has been more considerate for me than for others. If a man lacks honesty and principle with regard to one person, it is scarcely likely that he will show them towards another."

Frank made inquiry about the bill, and found, as he expected, that Bateman had not left a farthing towards meeting it. Then,

indeed, he was utterly prostrated. "It isn't right," he exclaimed, "that *all* should fall upon me."

"Does it, Frank?" asked his wife. "Have you a single trouble which is not mine?"

"No: I almost wish I *could* bear *all* by myself; but we are united alike in joy and sorrow,—God help us!"

He laid his head on his hands to hide his deep emotion; for Frank was in grievous trouble. However, desponding would do no good. He must try to face his new difficulties; and, in the first place, by straining every nerve, he managed to meet the note and pay his men their full wages. On Christmas eve he had but a few pence left, and no festal preparations had been made for the morrow. His children, all unconscious of their father's business difficulties or the utter exhaustion of his purse, were talking of past Christmas times, and anticipating similar good cheer and innocent enjoyments on the morrow. It brought tears into the mother's

eyes when she heard the youngsters talking, as they lay in bed, of its near approach; and she said, "Oh, Frank, it is hard! We shall have a dull Christmas this year. It isn't that I care for myself; but it is the poor children who reckon so on it. For my own part, I could be contented with a crust of bread and a draught of water, if I could but see a prospect of better days."

"And I could bear this, and should be strong enough to comfort you, if it were not that I am always possessed by the thought that I have brought these dark days upon us by my own rashness."

"You did it for the best, Frank. Don't reproach yourself, I beseech you. After all, I feel that while you are well and strong we are richer than many of our neighbours. And now let us see what we can contrive for the children to-morrow."

The consultation was not a cheerful one; for when Frank's pockets were turned out, they were found to contain less than a shil-

ling. "We shall be obliged to get a few things on credit," he said. "We never have run into debt for household necessities, and I don't owe a penny except what I have contracted in the way of business debts. However, no one in Millfield will refuse to trust us."

"I know that," said his wife: "so I must get on my bonnet and shawl." But still she lingered, and at length added, "Oh, Frank, I should be a bad hand at trying to deceive a shopkeeper. I shall just feel as if I were going under false pretences. I wonder how those people do who run up long scores which they never expect to pay!"

Mrs. Johnson's tardiness rendered her shopping excursion unnecessary; for, while the words were on her lips, a rap at the door announced a visitor. Nay, there were two,—sturdy lads, both of them, and sons of the Millfield carrier,—who stood outside, panting beneath the weight of a huge hamper which they had just placed upon the ground.

"Here's a basket from Thornholm, Mrs. Johnson. Father brought it in the cart, and he's only just got home, for the snow made the roads so bad. The carriage is paid, ma'am; but, my word, the basket *just is* a weight.'

Mrs. Johnson rightly interpreted this last remark into a hint that the young porters deemed themselves entitled to a gift for their trouble in conveying the said basket to its destination. She accordingly took some pennies from her husband's scanty store and bestowed a part on each of the lads.

"Thank you, Mrs. Johnson; thank you," they cried; and away they ran in high glee. She was fain to call her husband to carry in the hamper, as her strength was by no means sufficient. And how the contents of it gladdened the hearts of the father and mother! They both knew whence it came, for she had a sister, married to a small farmer; and winter, in the farm-house, is the season of good cheer. To say nothing of poultry, then fat and ready for market, it is the pig-killing

season, and flitches and hams are undergoing the curing process.

Now, Mrs. Johnson's sister always sent a big hamper full of what she called—and *we call*—"pig cheer" to Millfield, for her kinsfolk there; and it is easy to imagine how delighted the little Johnsons always were when "aunt's hamper" arrived. The basket did not generally come before Christmas; but it happened this particular winter that sundry porkers, having thriven more than common, were, in consequence of their fatness, condemned to a premature death. Thanks to this circumstance, poor Elizabeth's anxiety with regard to the Christmas dinner was all dispelled. "I dare not let the things remain packed until the morning," she said; "and yet you know how the children always love to see the contents of '*aunt's basket*' turned out. What must I do?"

Frank smiled. "I know what you mean," he said. "You might as well have told me that, as they are not asleep, you would like

to gladden them with a peep at the good things which neither you nor I expected to be able to show them; though they, with happy, childish faith, never doubted that this Christmas would be like all those that had gone before."

"Yes; I should like them to come, Frank: they are not asleep yet, I know. The carrier's boys, when they brought this load, took a great one away with them,—though they knew it not."

The poor mother did not consider that the children had not been sensible of the load; and, to please her, Frank shouted to them, "Who will come down and see aunty's basket unpacked?"

There needed no second summons; for, at those two words, a scrambling and scuffling were heard, a bumping down on the floor overhead, and then a pattering of feet on the stairs. All these sounds were followed by the trooping in of five youngsters varying in size, little Jenny being still in bed fast asleep. And,

as she was too young to be supposed to know much about hampers, she was allowed to remain there.

Aunty's basket had always exhibited her skill in packing, in a marvellous manner. It had, year by year, excited the wonder of the little Johnsons as to how its multifarious contents were ever deposited within its wicker sides. But on this occasion not only was the basket itself ever so much bigger than any that had come during previous winters, but it was more tightly packed than any before.

The children shouted with delight—as well they might—as each fresh dainty was handed out. There were piles of mince-pies, long coils of sausages, and a prodigious pie. Then there were a couple of fowls, and a goose,—such a beauty! There were sundry big apples,—“Yorkshire greens,”—whose appearance excited no longing to try their quality, in the childish on-lookers. *They* were undoubtedly for apple-sauce to eat with the goose. And there were others of a different hue, some rich

and red and satin-coated ("Painted Ladies' aunty called them), and some of a yellow hue and with a roughish skin, which the children recognized as "Golden Russets," and were fain to try their quality then and there, only their mother thought it would be advisable to wait till morning. Moreover, there was a Christmas loaf,—a family spice loaf,—suggesting that it was intended for people to "cut and come again." And last of all was a queer round bundle, enveloped in a brownish linen covering, the appearance of which puzzled the five pairs of juvenile eyes; but the mother exclaimed, at once, "How kind Jane is! She thinks of every thing. She has actually sent a great plum-pudding, tied up in a bag and half cooked!"

There was a shout of laughter at these words; for the children thought it so droll of their aunt to send a pudding, when their own mother knew so well how to make one herself.

But this thoughtful aunty knew a little of the state of things in her sister's home at

Millfield,—though she had no idea *how sad* they were at that moment. The farmer's wife had not very large means, for her husband's farm was not an extensive one, and their children were many. But she had a large heart; and, as she packed each of the good things into the hamper, she comforted herself with the idea, "I shall never miss it; and I know we shall be none the poorer for it at the year's end; while it will do Elizabeth a little good by saving her something this Christmas-time." She little guessed that it saved her sister a heavy heart-ache, and brought much gladness into her home that Christmas eve.

After the children had seen all the contents of the hamper taken out, they went off to bed again, to rejoice over their aunt's kindness and dream of coming festivity on the morrow.

"How good your sister is!" said Frank.

"Ay, Frank, and how good God is! This timely supply is from His bounteous hand, through whatever earthly one it may reach us."

With truly thankful hearts the father and

mother, relieved of one pressing care, blessed the Giver of all good for his mercy, and strove to think that, as he had assisted them in one season of difficulty, so would he again help and enable them to conquer the still greater trials which remained to be overcome.

And on the morrow, in the house of worship, they acknowledged, with humble joy and adoration, the inestimable gift which, many hundred years ago, was bestowed upon men, to provide for them the "means of grace and the hope of glory." It was a happy thought for them that, whatever else might be taken away, they could still claim their share in this precious boon, and that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

CHAPTER XI.

UNWELCOME VISITORS—FRANK FINDS OUT TO
WHOM THE FURNITURE BELONGS.



DAY of quiet rest passed all too soon for Frank Johnson, and the morrow found him immersed in all the anxieties which preceded it. He started for Hebworth betimes in the morning, hardly knowing what course to take, but resolved, at any rate, to see the gentlemen with whom he had contracted for the performance of the work, and to tell them of Bateman's flight and his own consequent troubles.

"If they have a bit of reason in them," he said, "they must see that I have not been to blame, and that it isn't right I should be ruined because the very elements have fought

against the success of my undertaking; and then the dishonesty of Bateman has left me with the whole responsibility resting on my shoulders. Unless they will advance me some more money, I cannot complete the work."

With this resolution, Frank Johnson walked to Hebworth; but he was not successful in meeting with either of the gentlemen he wished to see. During his absence a new trial fell upon his wife, and proved the one thing wanting to complete his ruin.

She had just washed her children and sent them off to school, after dinner, and was crossing her little yard to bring in some coal,—when two men passed before her, and entered the house without the ceremony of knocking. She was at first afraid to follow; but, seeing that they were respectably dressed, she supposed they had come on business connected with the work at Hebworth, and accordingly she entered, and courteously asked if they wished to see her husband.

"It doesn't matter at present," was the

answer of one of the men. "When he comes home will be soon enough. I dare say he'll be in no great hurry *to see us*; for we a'n't often very welcome visitors anywhere: are we, Bob?"

The individual thus addressed responded by a broad grin; and then, perceiving the look of distress and alarm on Mrs. Johnson's face, he composed his own into its former stolidity, while his companion resumed, "We're very sorry, ma'am, very sorry indeed, to trouble you; but we're obliged to do our duty, however unpleasant it may be; and of course you'll not hinder us in any way."

"Duty?" repeated Mrs. Johnson. "I don't understand you. What is it you have to do? My husband will be at home this afternoon, and——"

"Yes, ma'am, to be sure: all right. And we shall take the liberty to wait till he does come. Don't be alarmed: we sha'n't hurt or inconvenience you in any way."

A few words sufficed to explain the state of affairs. The men were sheriff's officers.

For a little time poor Elizabeth was too much overcome to make any further inquiry; but at length she was enabled to ascertain by whom these unwelcome visitors were sent. "You will tell me that, now?" she whispered; for more she could not do.

"Oh, certainly, ma'am: you've a right to know all about it. Mr. Bryant, the solicitor, gave us our authority; and it's in consequence of some bill of sale, or something of the sort, your husband gave as security for borrowed money."

"But the interest was paid to the very day: I know that."

"I dare say, ma'am: no doubt you're quite right in that little matter. But, you see, the principal comes to a good bit more than the interest; and what with Mr. Bateman making such a clean sweep of it, and everybody knowing that your husband had got such a heavy handful along with those works at Hebworth, it began to make the gentleman the money belonged to, afraid that *he* might be a

loser in the long run. So he thought he'd make hay while the sun was shining."

Oddly as the man thought fit to express his meaning, the poor wife had no difficulty in understanding it now. It meant just this:—that the chair on which she was sitting, the table at which her children had just returned thanks for their meals, and the beds on which they were accustomed to rest, could be called their own no longer, and that, in a few days at the most, a bare shelter only would remain to them. Yet, in the midst of this overwhelming trouble, she felt that the worst would only come when her husband, all unsuspecting of this new blow, returned from Hebworth, and her little ones from school should enter and find these strange and unwelcome guests at the fireside.

When Frank did arrive, he was almost frantic; for this he never anticipated. He rushed off, though faint and tired with his long and fruitless walk, to Mr. Bryant's office, and asked to see him. He was at once ushered

into the lawyer's presence, and said, ruefully, "You know what I'm come about, sir, of course."

"Yes, Johnson: I conclude there can be no mistake as to your errand. Very sorry for you, I'm sure; but what can we do?"

"Can't you give me a little time, sir?"

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders. "If it depended on me, I should be most happy to do it; but you are aware I am only acting for another person. In a place like this, a man's affairs are pretty well known. My client cannot afford to lose his money; and he thinks that if he waits much longer you may not have the power to repay it. Then the flight of Mr. Bateman has, I am sorry to say, done you harm."

"Surely, sir," said Frank, "I am not accountable for another man's want of principle. Bateman and I are two separate individuals; and I am sorry to say I am the greatest sufferer by his dishonesty. It has involved me in various kinds of trouble. But it isn't right,

because one man is a rogue, to blame the other who suffers by his knavery."

"Well, no; but, then, your being so closely connected in business matters with Bateman, and especially your joining him in what must be called a rash speculation rather than a regular business undertaking, has done you much harm."

Frank's face, pale enough when he entered, was flushed in a moment. Amid all his trials, it was harder for him to think that his honest name should suffer than for him to bear the rest. But he could not quarrel with that cool, immovable-looking lawyer, who plainly regarded Frank's ruinous position as in the ordinary way of business,—an incident that was happening to somebody or other every day, and, therefore, not worth making a fuss about. So, when Frank, choking the indignant words that rose to his lips, merely said, "Then you can do nothing to stop these proceedings, sir?" he replied, "I regret to say that I cannot."

Then Mr. Bryant resumed his pen and turned towards his papers, as if intimating that he should feel obliged to Frank to take his departure as soon as possible.

Frank stepped towards the door, but with his hand on the lock he bethought himself of a last chance.

"I beg your pardon for intruding on your time, Mr. Bryant," he said, "but will you tell me the name of the gentleman to whom the money belongs? Then I would see him and tell him just how I am situated, and ask him to give me a little time."

"I don't think it would be of any use: indeed, I feel sure of it. Your creditor is not a gentleman. He is a man in your own station, and cannot afford to lose his little property, or even to *risk* its final loss."

The thought of wife and children urged Frank, when for his own sake he would not have uttered another word, and he said, once more, "Will you please to tell me my creditor's name?"

Half annoyed, half amused, at his visitor's persistency, Mr. Bryant replied, "Well, if you must know, Johnson, your creditor is a former fellow-workman of yours,—Harry Enfield. The money came by his wife. Good-evening."

"Good-evening, sir, thank you," said Frank, mechanically, not thinking of his words, as he passed out of the lawyer's office into the frosty air. With the knowledge just communicated, his last hope fled. There would be no favour from Harry Enfield. He had hardly courage to enter the home so soon to be desolated; and he wandered up and down until his wife, who was anxiously awaiting him, caught a glimpse of him as she looked out in the gathering twilight, and went to meet him. One glance at his face told that his errand had met with no success, and the few words, "It was Harry Enfield's money that Mr. Bryant lent me," acquainted her with all they had to fear.

As the harassed couple lay on their pillows

that night, with the miserable certainty that the next would find them without a bed to lie upon, she begged her husband to tell Harry Enfield that *he* had preserved the life of his boy years before. "For the sake of his own child, Frank, he will have pity on us and our children, and not deprive us of every hope of retrieving matters, and of every present comfort."

But Frank was for once deaf to his wife's pleadings. "No," he answered: "if I would not tell him before, still less will I do it now. He would say that I had trumped up this tale on purpose to turn him from his purpose. I know the man better than you do."

"But Mr. Philips could tell him the same."

"He likes Mr. Philips no better than me, and it is possible he would disbelieve him too. But, whether or no, I will not call on Mr. Philips to confirm my story; for I shall not tell it. Some time Harry Enfield will be sorry for this day's work; and even now I shouldn't wish to change places with him.

However, we must bear our troubles as best we may. Besides, now I think of it, Mr. Philips is from home."

Mrs. Johnson was cogitating in her own mind whether there would be any harm in *her* telling the secret so long and faithfully kept,—when, as though Frank knew what she was thinking of, he said, "Elizabeth, I beg you will not say one word on the subject of my saving little Harry and his sisters from the fire. If you do, I shall feel deeply hurt, that now, when every thing is dark around me, my wife neglects or disobeys my expressed wish."

What could she do but promise that Frank's wish *should* be respected at any cost to herself? Then her husband was satisfied. It was some small consolation for him to know that Mr. Philips and his family were from home.

"I feel," he said, "as though I couldn't bear to have *him* looking on at this affair. I know it's a bit of the old pride that makes me have this feeling, and that it isn't exactly right to cherish it; but I'm glad, for all that."

Mr. Philips was absent from Sunny Lee. His eldest daughter having shown symptoms of consumption, the physicians had recommended a warmer climate. The whole family had gone, leaving only a couple of servants at Sunny Lee, to keep the house in order.

It is not difficult to imagine the state to which Frank Johnson's home was soon reduced; and worse than even the sight of it was the knowledge that its master was still considerably in debt. Were he even able to replace in some measure the furniture taken away, another creditor might seize it on the morrow. There were friends and kinsfolk who acted a kindly part and took the children among them. There were a few good debts due to Frank, which would pay off a portion of his liabilities, but not all; and at last, urged by his own friends, and by the lawyer—not Mr. Bryant—to whom he went for advice, Frank resolved to take the benefit of the Bankrupt Act. To him it was a miserable alternative; but there was no other

chance. "You say I must go through the Court, sir?" he remarked, after Mr. Marfleet had given his opinion.

"Undoubtedly it is the best thing for yourself, as well as for your remaining creditors. If you do, they will most likely complete those unfortunate works at Hebworth as soon as the weather permits, and then the rest of that money will come in."

"I shall feel like a thief, sir," said Frank, hastily.

"Nonsense, nonsense, my good man! that is taking an extreme view of your position. Hundreds and hundreds pass through the Court without a qualm of conscience. And I'm sure I don't see why you should have one. The worst that any person can say of you is that you rashly undertook a work which involved a great risk, and had the additional misfortune of a scoundrel for a partner therein. There is a wide difference between a dishonest trader who takes advantage of the Act in order to cheat his creditors, and the man who

is driven thither by real misfortune, as I am sure you are. So cheer up! We'll pull you through as well as we can."

"I suppose it must be, sir. I am driven to it; but, Court or no Court, law or no law, Mr. Marfleet, I shall never reckon myself a free man until I've paid my debts to the uttermost farthing. I'll do as you say; but it will be to gain time and means to pay."

The lawyer laughed outright. "You'll change your tone by-and-by, Johnson. When you are a *free* man in the eye of the law, you'll take these things easily, as others do. I've heard men make similar resolutions about paying at a future day, but, though I believe they were quite as much in earnest as you are now, I can't say that I ever knew one of them fulfil his determination afterwards. So, if you please, we will leave that matter for your further consideration."

At last the day arrived when Frank would come home a free man. Some little preparation had been made. A few, very few, homely

articles of furniture, nearly all of which were given to Mrs. Johnson, were deposited in a smaller cottage than they had ever before occupied; and there, with eager anxiety, she awaited the return of her husband.

Among those who showed themselves very kind to Frank's wife and children during the dark days, was Mrs. Aldridge. Indeed, a great part of the furniture of the new home came from her; while many a little dainty, prepared by her own kind hand, was carried by the builder's warm-hearted wife to the bedside of the ailing woman. Her husband knew of her doings, but did not choose to interfere in any way. Only when he was aware that the time of Frank's release from his creditors was at hand did he make any remark.

"So Frank Johnson will be home on Saturday, I hear," said Mr. Aldridge. "I should think he has eaten humble-pie enough to cure him of wanting to be a master-workman, for some time to come."

Now, little Mrs. Aldridge had never approved of her husband's conduct towards Frank Johnson; and it is more than probable that the well-to-do tradesman had felt sundry twinges of conscience on that score, which had made him unusually and wilfully blind with regard to his wife's somewhat lavish kindness towards Elizabeth. The answer he received was curt enough. "Yes, Frank Johnson is coming home. More's the shame and pity that he has been absent."

"Pity, certainly, dear; but no shame on anybody's shoulders but his own."

"I don't consider there is any resting on him, John. It rests on those who plotted to ruin him. For," she added,—a glance at her husband having told her that she was getting a little too warm,—"for I cannot help thinking that Harry Enfield foresaw what would come upon Frank, and lent him money, through Mr. Bryant, on purpose to be the instrument in completing his ruin. I rejoiced to see Enfield raised from the mire of sin and

self-indulgence in which he used to delight, and acting as though he had a sense of what he owed to his family; but that he is a bitterly vindictive man I cannot doubt. I *know* he exulted over the misunderstanding that arose between Frank Johnson and Mr. Philips, and that, while others were pitying the poor fellow who had lost his all, Harry was indulging in coarse jokes at Frank's expense, and sneering at his good wife."

"Nonsense, dear! You women cannot take a reasonable view of things. If, however, Harry did laugh at Frank, he had cause to laugh on the wrong side of his mouth; for, after all, the goods did not realize the amount of the debt, and Enfield will lose close upon a hundred dollars."

"I'm *heartily* glad of it," said Mrs. Aldridge, in such a vehement tone that her husband laughed immoderately, and wished to know, "Who is vindictive now?"

The little woman blushed at the implied rebuke, and said, "I *do* express myself very

warmly, John; but, really, I cannot feel much sympathy with Harry Enfield. If he had lost more, I'm afraid I should have thought he deserved it."

"We won't quarrel about it; though I am of opinion your sympathy in another quarter has cost me money."

"Oh, John, you surely do not grudge what I did for poor Johnson's family? They were in grievous need, and he was a workman who served you faithfully."

"It would have been better for him if he had never left me; but don't imagine I grudge what you have given to his wife and youngsters. They are heartily welcome. I wonder what Frank will do? If he should want employment, he can have it for the asking."

"I don't think it likely that the same roof will ever cover him and Harry Enfield during working-hours, John."

"Perhaps not. Well, if you can do any thing to help the poor destitute family, do it."

"Mrs. Johnson has been very ill. But


that her poor baby died as soon as it was born, there would now be another great tie to her weak hands. It is a mercy that she has it not; for how she would have managed I do not know."

John Aldridge, too, thought it was very well the poor baby was taken; and then he went out, feeling exceedingly uncomfortable as he reflected that *he* too had done not a little towards crushing the hopes and hurting the position of his once faithful workman. As he walked towards the workshop, he began to consider how he could now do Frank a kindness; not directly,—that, he thought, would be like owning that he had done wrong, and he was by no means prepared to do that,—but in an indirect fashion.

So Mr. Aldridge, as he pondered, bethought himself that Dick Halliday—always Frank's firm friend—would be a suitable agent to employ; and to him he resolved to speak on the subject when he came for his wages in the evening.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RETURN HOME—A FRIEND'S SALUTATION
—THE FIRST SUNDAY.

 FRANK JOHNSON'S eldest son was at the station to meet his father; and it was no small comfort to the poor man when he caught sight of his boy's eager face, and observed the look of gladness that lighted it up when their eyes met. "Oh, father, I am so glad you are come! and mother and the rest will be, too," said the lad.

Poor Frank! This coming home—much as he had longed for it—almost unmanned him. Though conscious that he had been unfortunate, not guilty,—save in respect to that one rash undertaking,—he yet felt deeply humbled and ashamed. He thought every

person he met was looking at him; and his own self-consciousness made him imagine that they regarded him as the bankrupt joiner who had crept out of his debts without paying them. As he passed onward, led by his son, to the *new* home that had been provided for his reception, he met Harry Enfield, who said, in a taunting tone, to a man who walked beside him, "That is Mr. Philips's great favourite. He has just paid his creditors in——"

Frank heard the beginning of this speech, but he did not allow it to be ended; for he interrupted the speaker. "You are not speaking to me, Enfield," he said, "but *at* me; and it doesn't show much courage on your part to taunt a ruined man. You know I have not yet paid my creditors, for you are one that I still owe some money to."

"I wasn't talking to you, sir," was the reply. "I want nothing either to say to you or to do with you; for your acquaintance is too expensive."

"I know you were not talking to me, En-

field; but I must say a few words, and you *shall* hear me."

Enfield quailed before the determined words of the unhappy man, and was in a manner constrained to listen.

"You are well aware," said Frank, "that my creditors have taken every thing, and that, but for the kindness of a few good friends, my wife and children would have been utterly destitute. While I was away, they would have starved, Harry Enfield,—*yes, starved*,—but God moved kind hearts to pity and care for them. Yet now, poor as I am, with nothing to call my own, I tell you, Harry Enfield, that if I am spared in health and strength I will pay my remaining debts,—yours among the rest."

"Oh, you're free, you know; clean,—*white-washed*, don't they call it? I'm inexperienced in such matters," was the insolent, taunting answer.

"I shall never feel free while I owe any man a penny. The debts will always be debts

to *me*, whatever they may be in law, till I have paid them. As to yours, Harry Enfield, I am very sorry I ever had your money. I did not know whose it was until the men came and took possession of my goods; then I asked Mr. Bryant. And now, in spite of your taunts, I tell you you will be no loser by me, if I am spared; and some day you'll be bitterly sorry that you have behaved so to a fallen man."

"He will be that, Frank," said a voice behind. "It's only cowardly work to kick a man when he is down. But cheer up, lad! There are plenty of folks in Millfield who feel for you, and will be ready to hold out a friendly hand to you again, as I do now."

There was no mistaking the voice. It was that of honest Dick Halliday; and his sturdy hand seized on Frank's and shook it heartily. Enfield slunk away: he never could contend with "Downright Dick," as his mates called Halliday.

Dick surveyed his old companion from head

to foot, and then said, "Frank, this trouble has made an old man of thee. Thou *art* altered. I went to the station to meet you, for I wanted a word before you got home, —though I dare say you are very anxious to see your missus. I was just too late; and I should have missed you, but for that fellow's stopping you on the road."

"He didn't stop me; he only said something aggravating as I went past: so I stopped him, and made him listen to what I had to tell *him*."

"That's right. Now I'll let you know my bit of business. Here, my boy, here's a penny for you; run home and tell your mother that your father's coming in a minute."

The boy ran off with a glad face; and as soon as he was out of hearing, Halliday continued:—"I just wanted to ask you, Frank, if twenty dollars would be of any use to you; because, if it would, I can lend you that much."

Poor Frank! Think him not unmanly for

giving way to emotion unusual with men. Remember, he had borne affliction bravely, and kept his temper, "not easily provoked" under much provocation. Yet, now, these kind words, this voluntary trust, were too much for him. He could only wring Dick's hand, and then he fairly sobbed like a child.

"Oh, my goodness! Frank, my dear fellow, don't take on like this, or I shall run away; for I can't bear it," cried Halliday, who was himself not a little moved by the sight of his friend's agitation.

"I hadn't a shilling in the world, Dick," whispered Frank. "I had but ten cents left when my fare was paid; and as I came along the street I was ashamed to look anybody in the face, because I felt as if folks would consider me a rogue. But you've put new heart into me, by showing that you think me an honest man,—though I have been a very unfortunate one. May God bless you, Dick, and keep such troubles as mine far from you and yours!"

"Thank you, lad. I'm a rough-spoken chap enough, but I wish you well, and I'll help you if I can. You must let me begin just now." And he pushed a twenty-dollar note into Frank's hand. "I can spare it," he added, "for I've always kept within bounds, as you know."

"I'll take it, and thank you with all my heart."

"Now be off home. Won't your wife wish me far enough, for keeping you here so long?"

"She will pray God to bless you, Dick, as I do."

"She's a good woman; and you'll both have many a happy day yet, in spite of Harry Enfield. It is a pity that fellow can't be civil to you, for he has improved wonderfully in other things. Mary's latter married days are better than her first ones."

"I'm glad of it. He'll change towards *me*, some time. I told him so five minutes since."

The men parted, and with rapid feet Frank hastened home. There was a mixture of tears

and smiles when he and his wife met; but Frank's heart ached as he saw her paler, thinner, and so much older in this little time. But they were together again, and Frank was well, though haggard and careworn. Then his account of Dick Halliday brought, not a ray, but a whole burst, of sunshine into the wife's heart.

And Frank wondered at the comfortable aspect of the little home, and learned that to Mrs. Aldridge much of this was owing. So he blessed the warm, womanly heart that moved its owner to deeds of kindness, and almost forgot how her husband had acted towards him.

In the evening Dick Halliday dropped in, and on his ruddy face was a look of mystery so unusual that Frank was fain to inquire what it meant.

"It means, do you want another twenty or fifty dollar note? Because, if you do, you can be accommodated. It isn't mine, mind you; but a person, a friend of yours, wished

me to ask you, as he had it to spare, and you can have the use of it without interest or security."

Frank laughed. He could hardly understand Dick's manner: so he shook his head, and answered, "No, thank you. I never mean to borrow money again through any second person. I shall deal with principals only."

"You suspicious fellow! As though I were going to lead you into a scrape. Isn't it a shame, Mrs. Johnson?"

"Tell me what you mean, Dick. I know there's something under all this joking."

"It's no joke, Frank, so far as the money goes, for there it is," and he laid sundry bright eagles on the table; "but I don't see that there will be any harm in my telling you where it comes from. When I went for my wages to-night, Mr. Aldridge kept me waiting till the last, and then he said, 'Sit down a bit, Halliday. I want a word with you. Has Frank Johnson got home yet?' I told

him yes; and then he asked, 'Is he badly off, think you?' I told him I thought you was. 'Then I should rather think a small sum would be a help to him.' 'No mistake about that,' says I. 'Well, then,' says Mr. Aldridge, 'I've not forgotten what a good, steady workman Frank was in old days; and, though I do think he has acted very foolishly, I should like to be of use to him, for the sake of those old times. But I know he's a little bit proud; and may-be if I were to offer him a trifle of help he'd refuse it: so I want you to do it for me.'"

"Then it was Mr. Aldridge who sent you with that money?" exclaimed Frank, eagerly.

"It was. I'm letting the cat out of the bag; but, as I saw you would have nothing to do with the money unless I told you all about it, —why, I thought I might as well; and now you can do as you think best."

"I don't think it was MY pride that hindered Mr. Aldridge from offering me this kindness himself," said Frank.

"Neither do I," interposed his wife; "for Mrs. Aldridge has been very good to me during poor Frank's absence, and she knows that no false pride prevented me from accepting her help. On the contrary, I was and am truly grateful for it."

"Perhaps, then, it was his own pride. We know that, since Frank set up in business, Mr. Aldridge has acted rather queerly, and I've no doubt he feels sorry now: though he wouldn't own as much to anybody living, I take it that his offering you help, through me, comes to the same thing. And now, Frank, will you make use of this cash?"

"No, Dick: I shall manage with what you've lent me; and I hope, if it please God, I shall not be long in your debt. I shall begin to work on Monday morning. I have a job or two promised me; and I'll work my fingers to the bone before it shall be said I've wronged anybody. I only ask strength from God and patience from man, and I'll yet stand honest in this respect before both. Ay, even Harry

Enfield shall own me an upright man; though I hear that he talks of the money lost through me."

"As to Harry Enfield, nobody would have pitied him much if he had lost all his money; because it is well understood that his object in lending it to you was just to get you into his power and ruin you if he could. And as to other folks having patience,—why, they must. Nobody can make you pay a farthing; and all know that you have kept nothing back. I must say, these debts—as you call them—would lie lightly on my conscience, if I were in your place."

"They never will on mine. I can't feel that it is right for me to leave them unpaid, if I can any way manage to earn the means of paying them. However, that won't be just yet."

Dick Halliday thought not, and turned away to hide the smile he could not suppress at the idea of poor Frank beginning to talk of paying off his old scores, when he hadn't a penny except what had just been loaned him.

Rather a limited capital to start in life with for the second time! But Dick would not say a word to discourage his friend, though he was far from believing in the possibility of his hopes being fulfilled. So, heartily wishing him every success, Dick took his departure, and on his way home called at Mr. Aldridge's to restore the money.

"Frank wouldn't have it, then?" asked the latter.

"Why, sir, a friend of his had been beforehand with you. He knew Frank would come home with empty pockets: so he lent him twenty dollars to make a start with. Frank is very much afraid of getting into trouble again through borrowing money, and so he wouldn't take what you offered, through me; not but what I'm sure he is very much obliged to you for the chance."

"I suppose he's not likely to seek employment here?"

"No, sir. He has a job or two to go to."

So the matter ended for the time. But the

money thus restored to Mr. Aldridge's pocket made him feel much less satisfied with himself than he would have been had it gone into Frank Johnson's. In fact, the worthy builder fingered it very much as a child would rattle the pennies which he was forbidden yet longed to spend. Besides, conscience had been reproaching him; and the getting rid of this money, in the manner planned, would have acted as a salve to the wounded monitor within; whereas now it *would* remind him that he had helped to place poor Frank Johnson in his present position.

The Sabbath sun rose on Frank's poor little home, and if by its cheering rays it lighted up the dwelling, it also showed its meagre belongings in all their scanty poverty: yet, thanks to the tidy habits of his wife, there were neither dangling cobwebs from its ceiling, dust coating its walls, nor disarrangement of the few necessary articles of furniture it contained. She had, indeed, made the best of things; and now, reunited to her husband,

she felt thankful, and almost rich, in comparing her present state with the trials she had recently passed through. But Frank sighed as he glanced around, and said, "This is so different from what I hoped for you, my dear wife!"

"We will not look back, Frank: we *must* not. Let us rather think how much worse things might have been. Here you were but just out of the train, when kind Dick Halliday came to offer you a loan to meet your present needs."

"Ay, God bless him! I could almost have gone down on my knees to thank him."

"It was of God's sending, Frank. And, then, when you came home to this place, poor as it is, you found us all in health again; and a few weeks since I was afraid that whenever you did come there would be no wife to receive you."

"True: I ought to think of these things. God has indeed remembered me in mercy."

"And we shall all go together to the place

of worship to thank Him: sha'n't we, Frank? The children have gone to the Sunday-school, all but Jenny, and we will take her with us. She is big enough to behave well in church, now."

Frank demurred at this. "I should like to go, but I feel as though I couldn't bear it. I know there will be people who will look at me with curious eyes: nay, there may be whispers, and some will call me a hypocrite, perhaps. I want to get accustomed to meeting people again, before I go to church."

"Oh, Frank, surely you can't mean that. It will be false shame that will keep you away, if you don't go. Is it to please men or to worship God that we go to the sanctuary? Is it right to consider what men will say, or to do what God, who sees our hearts, will approve?"

"I know it isn't right to let such things move me; but I'm only a man, after all, and——"

"Frank Johnson must not forsake his old reason. It used to be always enough for you

to be convinced that a thing *wasn't right*, and then nobody could move you to take part in it. And, surely, if you feel that this is a weakness, it must be the way to get weaker still if you yield to it. Oh, Frank, I have reckoned on your coming home for every reason that a wife could have, but for none more than this,—that we should once more kneel together in the house of prayer.”

“I will go. It isn't right to stay at home because of what men may say or think: so we'll go together.”

And go they did; and it comforted them, and strengthened them too, as the true worship of God always does “comfort and help the weak-hearted.” And though there might be, and undoubtedly were, some who cast contemptuous looks at Frank, and wondered “that he could show his face out of doors after beggaring his family by his folly, and not paying people all their dues,” there were others who were glad that Frank had not forgotten his way to God's holy temple, though

he had long been prevented from worshipping there.

Frank and his good wife had endured much mental and bodily suffering, and had felt that it is only in time of adversity that we become sensible of the need for that Friend who is above all earthly friends and "who sticketh closer than a brother." And Frank Johnson said, when he re-entered his poor home, "I am glad I went with you this morning. It has done me good. God grant me grace, for Christ's sake, to walk in his ways, whatever may happen to me."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST CREDITOR SATISFIED, AND EVIL
OVERCOME WITH GOOD.



AMONG the Millfield folks were many who felt deeply for Frank Johnson, and who showed their sympathy by giving him employment,—not, of course, large pieces of work, but such as he could do with small outlay,—and by paying him ready money. So, by dint of very hard work, Frank made something more than a living, and gradually got together a few articles of furniture. Then he paid his friend Dick Halliday the twenty dollars; and (but this was *very* soon after his return to Millfield) he had a visit from Mrs. Aldridge, which took a great load of anxiety off his mind. And this was how it came about.

After Mr. Aldridge had tried to aid Frank by employing Dick Halliday as his agent, and failed in effecting his purpose, he took counsel with his wife as to the best means of bringing about what he wished. She—quick-witted and kind as usual—hit upon a scheme at once, and herself went to propose it. She chose a time when she was sure of finding Frank at home, and, after a little preliminary conversation, she introduced the subject, which was rendered all the easier by the sight of Frank's boys, who were employed, the one in doing a sum, the other in teaching little Jenny the alphabet.

"It is a great pity they are not at school," she said: "they are just at an age when boys gain so much."

She had touched a tender point with Frank, and she knew it; for the father sighed, and said, "I know that too well, Mrs. Aldridge. My great wish was to give my lads good schooling; and that is the one thing I can't do at present. They are losing sadly, and it

troubles me not a little to think that, while I may make up almost any thing else, I can't—by any future pains or expense, if it should be in my power—make up for this wasted time."

"It need not be wasted, unless you wish it," said Mrs. Aldridge. "My husband has sent me on purpose to say that, if you will allow him to do so, he will gladly bear the expense of your children's schooling, at any school you may name, for the next twelve months, as he thinks it a great pity such promising boys should want it. He is a father himself, and, though Mr. Aldridge has his little peculiarities, he sympathizes very deeply with the anxieties which parents feel on behalf of their children." Mrs. Aldridge saw a refusal in Frank's eye; for we must own that he had his weaknesses. He was stubborn, after his fashion, and proud too. And a false pride would probably have hindered him from accepting this timely offer, if the kind-hearted woman who thus came with friendly proposals

had given him an opportunity to utter it, or had opposed pride to pride. But she did not. She continued, rapidly, as was her wont,—“Mr. Aldridge has not forgotten the days when you served him so well, Johnson; and now he would so much like to be of service to you in return, through your children, if you will but let him. You don't know how glad it will make him if I go back and say that you accept his offer. And, besides, I don't mind telling you that my husband wishes in some degree to make amends for other matters. Am I to say any more, Frank?”

The good little woman looked up in Frank's face, as if she would tell him with that look that she knew her husband had been somewhat ungenerous to his old workman, but would he compel *her* to speak of this weakness of which he was ashamed?

Frank's heart was far too warm, and his disposition too generous, to withstand such words and such an appealing look. Besides, had not his old master and his wife hit on the

thing above all others which he could most willingly and thankfully accept? So he turned to her, and answered,—

“No, Mrs. Aldridge: please to explain nothing. I understand exactly what you mean, and I’m very, very grateful. If there has been any thing at all unpleasant between me and Mr. Aldridge, you did more than enough to wipe it away when my poor wife was ill and I was absent. It is a long time since Mr. Aldridge and I had a word together; but if he’s at home I’ll go just now and tell him that I thank him and will gladly accept his kind offer.”

“Do, Frank,” returned Mrs. Aldridge, rejoiced at her success. “And I shall stay and talk to your wife while you are away.”

She did stay; and those two true women “*talked things over*” together, and Mrs. Aldridge told Mrs. Johnson, in confidence, what a capital husband and father her John was, only he had his little crotchets—as who has not? and that she endeavoured to chime in with

them as far as possible, instead of provoking him by feminine lectures and direct opposition. "And," she said, "he is sure to see if he has been wrong, and, of his own accord, to make amends after a time." Then she informed Mrs. Johnson that Mary Enfield would have liked to come to see her in her season of trouble and sickness, but dared not, on account of Harry being so bitter against Frank; but that she always hoped they would some time get to be friends.

Mrs. Johnson, on her part, informed Mrs. Aldridge that her Frank's chief fault was his being proud in his peculiar way. "Not, you know, as some people are; for he's humble enough in most things; only——"

And here, as she rather came short of words to express her meaning, Mrs. Aldridge nodded her head sharply, and said, "I know. I understand him exactly. I was afraid that very feeling would hinder him from accepting my husband's offer."

"And it would, if Mr. Aldridge had offered

it himself; or they would not have understood each other."

"No: my John, with the best intentions in the world, would have done it awkwardly."

And the little woman clapped her hands, and laughed at the superior diplomacy *she* had displayed in dealing with Frank's pride.

When Mrs. Aldridge rose to go, Mrs. Johnson begged her to tell Mary Enfield that Frank would be sure to pay the rest of the money some time, and that she had never thought her unkind for not coming, because she knew how things were between their husbands. In the mean while, Frank and his old master had met, and Mr. Aldridge, glad that the former was willing to receive his kindness in a right spirit, had shaken him by the hand, and insisted on his staying a little while with him and taking a meal together. And thus the hearts of the two men were opened. Frank told Mr. Aldridge all his troubles; and, Mr. Aldridge's conscience pricking him the more, he was moved to say even more than was his wont;

and very earnestly and truly did he sympathize with his former workman. So they settled about the children going to school,—the same school Mr. Aldridge's own boys attended, though Frank at first protested against so much expense. And, lastly, the wealthy builder, by way of crowning the occasion, said, "Johnson, I know you'll sometimes be put about for a bit of wood to go on with, while money is scarce; but don't let the want of cash stop you. Come to my place and tell me what you need, and I'll let you have it. I'll trust you, and welcome."

Every atom of Frank's pride had vanished before this; and now he found it hard work to thank Mr. Aldridge, who, for his part, wished to avoid thanks altogether. When Frank was about to start for home, his old master said he would walk with him and bring Mrs. Aldridge back. Thus the two husbands and wives met on Frank's threshold, and all felt brimful of kindness as they parted.

It was owing to that last proposal of Mr.

Aldridge's that Frank was enabled to get on better, far better, than he had expected; and his incessant industry could not fail to produce its fruits. A little incident which occurred a couple of months after his return home, produced a favourable impression on some who had hitherto judged him harshly, and among the rest his former friend, Mr. Philips.

The owner of Sunny Lee had come back with his family to Millfield, and he was just then full of a plan he had formed for building a number of model cottages for working-men. This project he discussed with a gentleman who had acted as his steward during his absence from Sunny Lee. Mr. Burnley, the gentleman alluded to, heartily approved of the plan, and said, "If you have not fixed on a person to do the joiners' work, may I ask you to give it, or a part of it, to poor Frank Johnson, who is struggling hard to get his head above water again?"

Something very like a frown appeared on Mr. Philips's face as he heard this; and he

answered, somewhat shortly, "That man has disappointed me once,—you know all about that,—and he has ruined himself by a wild-goose scheme, by which he expected to make a fortune, and has since been figuring in the Bankruptcy Court. I don't employ persons who have appeared there."

"Let me tell you something before you decide. I was making some alterations in my place, two or three weeks since, and, believing the poor fellow was rather to be pitied than blamed, I determined on giving him the work, though I had lost, or thought I had lost, some money by him. Johnson was quite glad of the work; and, knowing his position, I would have paid him a little money as he went on; but he said, 'I was in hopes you would give me this job, Mr. Burnley, because, though I must take *part* of the money for it, I should like to leave some towards paying what I owe you.' You know I could not claim a farthing; but the honest fellow insisted on giving me a portion of what I had considered lost; and I

don't doubt that he will carry out the resolution he has expressed,—namely, to be a free man, not only in the eye of the law, but so far as his conscience is concerned.”

“Then you think he means to pay off his old debts?”

“I'm sure he will, if he can do it by hard work and self-denial. His old master, Aldridge, has come to, and sends Johnson's children to school, besides making up for past differences by help in the way of business.”

“I'll send for Frank Johnson this very day,” said Mr. Philips, energetically. “He'll turn out a man after my own heart yet; and, hard as his past experience has been to bear, it will be the making of him.”

Mr. Burnley laughed good-humouredly. “I thought,” said he to himself, when Mr. Philips's back was turned, “*that* little tale of mine would make things right for Frank at Sunny Lee.”

Frank was greatly astonished when Mr. Philips sent a message requesting him to go

to his house that evening; but he did not hesitate to comply with it. When he entered the familiar room, he found Mr. Philips with plans and drawings before him.

"Oh, Johnson, here you are," said that gentleman, looking up. "You've had your troubles since we met last; and so have I."

Frank assented, and ventured to ask if Miss Philips were better.

"Yes, thank you: she can bear to breathe her native air again now. Is your good wife well?"

Frank told him she was as well as usual.

"That is right. Now, you remember what I said when you were here last. I blamed you for not being more frank with me, when you knew I wished to serve you."

"Yes, sir; and I felt very sorry that any thing had happened to cause you to blame me. Only, Mr. Philips, I hope you will excuse me naming this: I had no wish to conceal any thing from you; but you were the contractor, and I was the plain mechanic, and the

difference between your position and mine made me feel as though I was taking a liberty in intruding my affairs so much upon your notice. I have been rash and to blame in many things, and too proud, perhaps: still, I never meant to be otherwise than straightforward."

"I quite believe you; and so we'll let by-gones be by-gones. I have heard from Mr. Burnley that you want to pay your creditors in full. I like your determination, and wish to help you to carry it out,—not by lending you money, but by giving you work."

Frank expressed his thanks, and then he and Mr. Philips went deep into plans and particulars. Terms were agreed upon, and Johnson's heart was made glad by the information that the money for the work would be paid him in six instalments, instead of nearly all together or in halves. Thus he would always have money to go on with, and, as he would need to employ other workmen, to pay wages.

Frank went home rejoicing. "Oh," said he to his wife, "it isn't right to despair, however dark the clouds may be that hang over us. I am already beginning to feel that my very troubles past will soon look like blessings, as I glance back upon them."

As may be supposed, Harry Enfield viewed Frank's improving prospects with no gratification. He grumbled about the money still owing to himself, and sneered at Mr. Aldridge for being duped by such a smooth-tongued swindler. "He'll be making another break of it, by-and-by," said he, "and then Mr. Aldridge will find out, as I've done, that Frank Johnson knows how to take care of number one. He's paid an odd sum or two, I hear, to make folks believe that he means to cash up all; but he knows better than that. He's doing it to gain credit and get a good purse; then, some fine morning, we shall hear that he's off to join his old friend Bateman."

"Hold thy noise, lad," interposed Dick Hallyday. "Our boss has a right to do what he

likes with his own; and he's shown himself a good-hearted man at the bottom. As to the money thou makest such a fuss about, we all know what it means. Thou'rt well pleased to have something to call Frank Johnson ill names about. That privilege is worth more than the money to thee. You'll be sorry when he pays you; for then you won't have a thing to sneer about."

"If my head never aches till he pays me," growled Harry, "I shall never have *that* ache again."

"Thy head seems sound enough now-a-days; for thou doesn't muddle it. I wish thy heart was as good as thy head and thy hands are. That's the worst wish I wish thee," said immovable Dick Halliday, as he shouldered his tools and marched out of the shop.

Frank heard of Enfield's sneers; but they moved him not. His old words, "*It isn't right* in Harry: he'll be sorry some day," were all he said. But he worked on, ever keeping before him his determination to prove himself

honest in the sight of all men. It was slow work, and Frank had many drawbacks; for of course his family must be provided for out of his earnings, and his gains were sometimes but small, and allowed of no saving. But at length the time did come when he was enabled to carry into effect his cherished purpose. Partly in work, partly in money, he had found means to pay his creditors, or was ready to pay them, in full. Mr. Philips, between whom and Frank perfect confidence now existed, expressed a wish to accompany him on the pleasant errand.

People were pleased, but not surprised, at being paid, for Frank's conduct had prepared them for this; and congratulations, praise and good wishes were showered upon him on all sides.

There was just one more call to make, and that was for the purpose of giving Harry Enfield his money, with interest thereupon to the last fraction; for here Frank's "bit of pride" peeped out, and he would not have

been a penny short for the world. Frank was at first inclined to send the money; but Mr. Philips urged him to see Harry Enfield: so they went to his house, and were admitted.

There was a half-sneering, half-defiant look on Harry's face as he saw his visitors. "Sit down, gentlemen," said he,—with no slight emphasis on the last word. "Mr. Philips, you turned me out of your house once; but I'm happy to receive you under my roof, humble as it is."

"A very comfortable home, Enfield," was the quiet answer. "I congratulate you on having such a one, and on showing the desire to keep it."

Harry coloured a little. He was reminded of that winter's night when his former poor home was burned to ashes, and his wife and children owed the means of procuring necessities to the bounty of Mr. Philips and others like him in liberality. "Well," he said, "it is an improvement on old times."

"Which it is best to forget, for some rea-

sons. I prefer to think of you as you are, and not as you were, Enfield."

There was nothing in Mr. Philips's manner which could offend, and Enfield knew not how to answer. Neither did Frank Johnson give him time. "I have called to pay what I owe you, Harry," he said.

"Oh, you owe me nothing," was the careless answer. "You went through the Court and cleared off old scores. *I've* no claim."

"I am glad to say that I have cleared off old scores by paying a hundred cents in the dollar. You are the only one who has not received it; and I am here to give you yours, principal and interest, to the last penny." Frank laid the money down on the table; and surely it was an honest pride which made him draw himself up and stand erect before the man who had for years taunted, insulted and slandered him.

Harry's old stubborn nature was not yet subdued. He muttered something about it's being a good thing to have friends with long

purses. "If you think I have dipped into any purse but that which held my own honest earnings, you do me a great injustice. I have had friends, but they have given me work,—not money; and it is through the strength with which God has blessed me that I have been enabled to earn the means of paying you and others. By the sweat of my brow I have won back the name of an honest man. Please to give me my receipt, and let me go."

"Run and fetch a stamp, Harry," said Enfield to his boy; and the bright-eyed lad laid down his book and darted off. Not a word was spoken during his absence, and only He who sees all hearts knows how the father was struggling with himself at the time. His obstinate spirit was not easy to tame. When the lad came back, his father bade him write out the receipt, and then he himself signed it. Mr. Philips looked admiringly at young Harry's bold penmanship; and Enfield, who was very proud of his son, observed, "He beats his father a long way, Harry does."

Frank and Mr. Philips were on their feet to go,—they were, in fact, turning towards the door,—when Enfield's voice stopped them. "Frank," he said, "stay a minute. You know what I am pretty well, and can guess that it costs me something to own myself wrong. But, after all, *it isn't right*, as you used to say, to let an old grudge last forever. You are an honest man; and I'm ashamed of myself; and that's all about it."

Frank made no more ado, but, seizing Harry's hand, he shook it heartily, whereupon Enfield observed, as he returned the pressure, "One thing that made me shy of owning that I had done wrong by you was this: I felt that if you had behaved to me as I have done to you for years past, I never could have forgiven you."

"It doesn't always do to measure another man's corn in your own bushel," replied Frank, illustrating his meaning by the use of a homely proverb.

"I see that; but I don't know how you can

manage to keep your temper with and forgive a fellow who has been so provoking as I have."

"But I do," said Mr. Philips. "Frank has tried to do what is right; and he has been in the habit of going to a certain Book for guidance. By his conduct to you, he has proved how possible it is, by divine grace, to obey the command, 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

There was something still on Mr. Philips's mind. "Enfield," he said, after a brief pause, "I am told you have often wished to know who saved your children's lives at the risk of his own."

"I have that; and I tell the truth when I say that there is nothing I would not do for that man, if I knew him."

"I have known all along, Enfield."

"Oh, Mr. Philips, you don't mean it! Was it you?"

"It was not; but I am bound to secrecy, or I would tell you. May I, Frank?" he whispered, turning to Johnson.

"I'll tell him, *now that we are friends*," said Frank. "Harry, I should never have named it to any living soul, but Mr. Philips found it out by coming to my house. I was lucky enough to be the instrument, in God's hands, of preserving those dear little things from——"

A great cry broke from Harry Enfield.

"Oh, Frank, can you really forgive me? What a wretch I have been to you! Why didn't you tell me? I'd have bit my tongue off before I'd have said a taunting word. How shall I ever make you amends?"

The man sobbed—yes, fairly sobbed—with deep emotion; and the scene which followed may better be imagined than described. Harry would have had Frank take back not only the money he had brought, but would have placed all he had in his possession. "It couldn't be in better hands," he said.

Frank drew himself up at the mention of money, and Mr. Philips interposed. "This man is prouder than you would imagine,

Enfield," he said. "Pride kept him from owning the service he had rendered you; and not only pride, but, what is better, principle, would keep him from accepting any other amends than that you have already made. I believe his great wish has been to convince you and others that he deserves your good will and respect. Give him these, let enmity cease between you, and he will be well contented."

It is needless to say that Mr. Philips well expressed Frank's thoughts for him, or that this interview between the men who had so long been estranged made them friends for life. Their good wives rejoiced that they were once more permitted neighbourly intercourse. Cheery Mrs. Aldridge laughed and cried by turns when she heard Mary Enfield's version of the story, and heartily hoped that Harry's name would be mixed up with no more brawls.

Frank has gone on steadily. "Not slothful in business," and all the wiser for past

troubles, he has won the prosperity which his honesty and industry deserved. They occupy the home in which they were established when Frank first set up for himself; and Frank's dream is in part realized, for a stout maiden helps in the household work.

Mr. Aldridge is not jealous of his old workman,—though there is a likelihood that Harry Enfield will desert the bench in his shop and join Frank Johnson. He has offered to throw his little capital and his best energies into the business; and Mr. Philips thinks that Frank may safely try him as his partner. The two would well like to have Dick Halliday with them also; but our old acquaintance—as plain-spoken as ever—says he “shall stick to his first employer so long as he can drive a nail. Besides,” he jocosely adds, “who can tell whether Frank will start speculating in sluice-making, or Harry betake himself to the Wheatsheaf again? I’ll keep my bit of brass where it is.” They know what this means, well enough. It is just this:—that

he will not leave Mr. Aldridge for anybody living.

I fancy the new firm of "Johnson & Enfield" will prosper; for Harry has adopted Frank's reason, and says, by God's help, he'll not do any thing if his conscience tells him that "It isn't Right."

THE END.

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